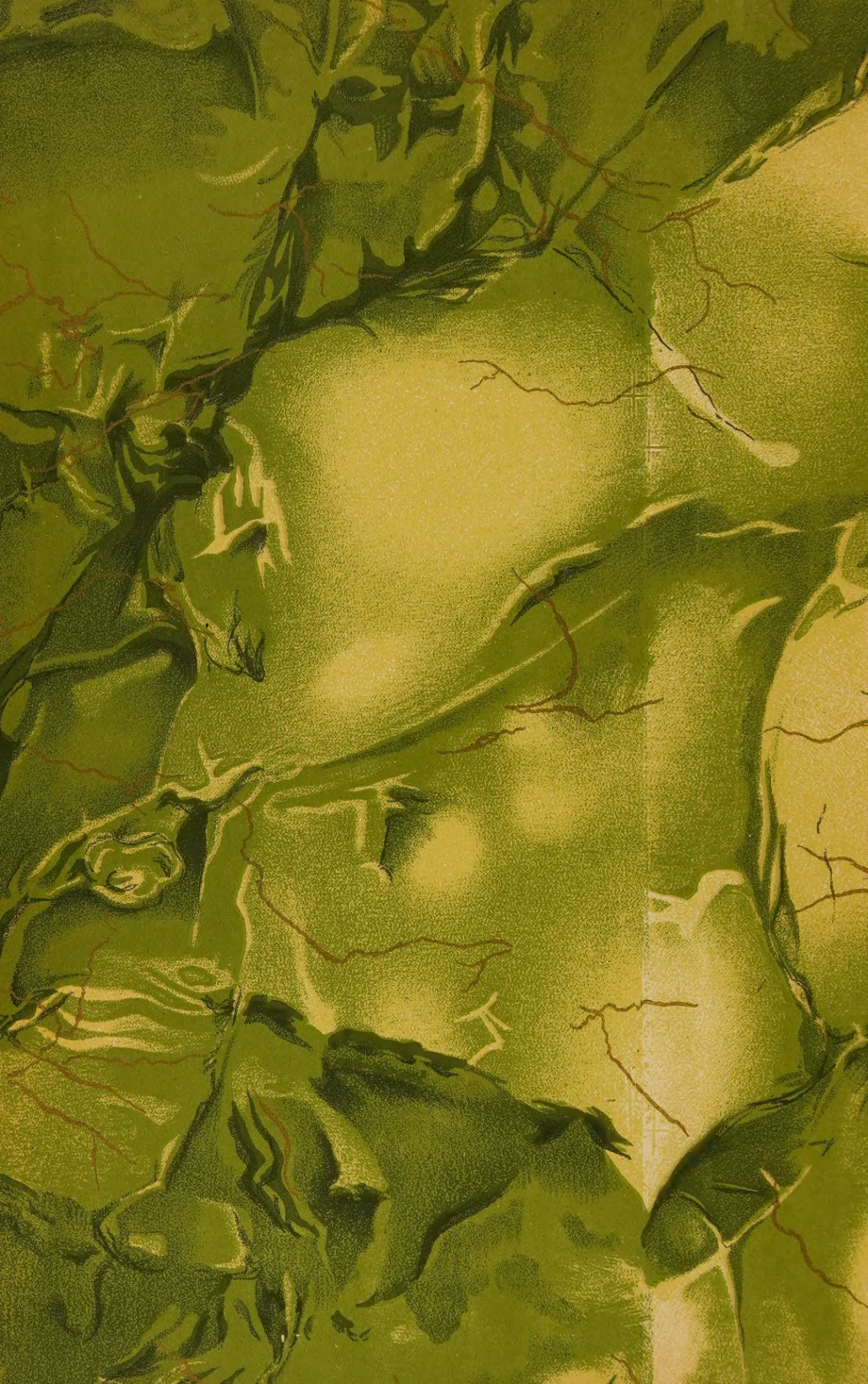

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THE LIFE OF NAPOLEON

THE LIFE OF NAPOLEON

BY DMITRI MEREZHKOVSKY

AUTHOR OF "NAPOLEON THE MAN"
"THE BIRTH OF THE GODS" ETC.

TRANSLATED FROM THE
RUSSIAN BY CATHERINE ZVEGINTZOV

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First Edition

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DAWN

FROM BIRTH TO VENDEMIAIRE

I

CHILDHOOD

1769—1779

"Genealogical research into the origin of the house of Bonaparte is childish. The answer to inquiries as to its date is quite simple: the 18th Brumaire. How can anyone have so little feeling of decency and respect towards the Emperor as to attach any importance to his lineage? As soldier, citizen, monarch—he owes everything to his sword and to the love of the people." This paragraph, probably inspired by Napoleon himself appeared in the official *Moniteur* on the 25th Messidor—14th July, 1805, six months after his coronation. "Thus speaks a great man!" exclaimed one of his cleverest women admirers.[1] "I never even glanced at any of my genealogical parchments; they were always in Joseph's custody, he was our family genealogist," the Emperor would say laughingly.[2] "I am one of those men who are everything in themselves and nought by their ancestors." "*Qui sont tout par eux-memes et rien par leurs aieux.*" [3]

The Buona-Partes were an ancient and noble family hailing from Treviso and Florence, whose family tree was traced, possibly by overzealous genealogists, up to

[1] Thibaudeau.
[2] *Mémorial*, I.
[3] Chuquet, I.

the beginning of the 10th century. One of the Buona-Partes is said to have joined the First Crusade. In the latter half of the 13th century, a Florentine patrician, Guilielmo Buonaparte, who took part in the struggle between the Guelphs and the Ghibellins, was proclaimed an outlaw and banished forever from the Florentine Republic. He migrated to Sarzano, a small town in the Genoese Republic. There the representatives of the exiled family led an impoverished existence for two and a half centuries, occupying posts of syndics, notaries and members of the Council of Elders. At last in 1529, Francesco, the last scion of the Sarzano branch of the Buonapartes, settled in Ajaccio in Corsica. Here, still bearing the proud title of Florentine patricians but reduced to poverty and obscurity, the descendants of the house dwelt in idleness and penury, as befitted gentlemen, eking slender incomes from their small plots of land, olive groves, vineyards and herds of sheep and goats.

Napoleon, by his heredity, is a belated *condottiere* of the 15th century, of the type of Malatesta, Sforza and Colleone—"a bandit of genius"; this hypothesis proclaimed by Taine still remains a commonplace.[4] Yet throughout its history the Buonaparte family did not include a single *condottiere*; whereas it did possess the "beatific" father Bonaventura.[5] This alone is sufficient to destroy Taine's theory; why, indeed, should the blood of a non-existent "bandit" supposed to be flowing in Napoleon's veins, prove stronger than that of a *bona fide* saint?

[4] Taine.
[5] Antommarchi, I., *Memorial*, I.

Napoleon's father, Charles Bonaparte, the youngest member of the family, was extremely handsome, tall and slender, "a veritable Murat," as his widow was wont to describe him afterwards;[6] an accomplished ladies' man, a rollicking and genial companion and typical Italian wag of a lawyer; a disciple of Voltaire and writer of free-thinking verses and madrigals; an astute adjudicator in difficult cases, a persistent and tireless petitioner in constant attendance on the great ones of the earth; fairly clever but weak and scatter-brained; "too fond of pleasure to think of his children," as Napoleon said;[7] himself half a child, he was their constant mediator before their stern mother.

Having studied jurisprudence at the Pisan University, he held the post of accessor in the French Royal Court at Ajaccio.

It seems that with the exception of his surname, the beautiful oval of his face, his steel blue eyes and his terrible disease—cancer in the stomach, Napoleon had inherited nothing from his father. This is another blow at Taine's *condottiere* theory: the Bonaparte heredity was weakest in Napoleon—the son took after the mother, not the father.

In 1764 Charles wooed and was accepted by Maria-Letizia Ramolino, daughter of the chief road inspector of Ajaccio, of the family of Pietra-Santa, also fallen into decay but of ancient lineage and said to have descended from the ruling princes of Lombardy. The groom was eighteen, the bride sixteen: the impoverished Cor-

[6] Chuquet, I.
[7] Taine.

sican nobles hastened to marry off their daughters to rid the home of an extra burden.

Signora Letizia was renowned for her beauty even in Corsica, famous for its beautiful women. There exists a portrait of her in her youth.[8] The face with the charm of its grave, enigmatically tender smile recalls that of Mona Lisa Gioconda, or the images of her kindred Etruscan goddesses with the same fleeting smile, whose effigies abound in the immemorially ancient burial places of Etruria-Tuscany. It seems as if the light of their smile was reflected to us through the ages in that of the second Gioconda and Etruscan Sibyl—Napoleon's mother.

Antiquam exquirite matrem

"Mankind possesses two great virtues, which command infinite homage: virility in men and chastity in women," says Napoleon, doubtless thinking of his mother.[9] He knows that the brave are born of the chaste.

"The rustic Cornelia, *Cornélie rustique*," was Paoli's, the Corsican hero's, name for her. To the end of her days, the Emperor's mother, like all Corsican high-born ladies, differed little from the peasant women. Reading, writing, the four rules of arithmetic, were all she knew. She did not even learn to speak French properly; she mutilated the words and spoke with a coarse Italian accent. At the gorgeous ceremonies in the Tuileries she appeared simply, almost shabbily dressed and was parsimonious, almost avaricious. "People say I'm stingy,

[8] Lacour-Gayet.
[9] Bertaut.

vilaine. . . . Some day perhaps the children will be grateful to me for what I put by for them." She put everything by—"commoulait"—for the rainy day, and when it did come was willing to sell everything to her last chemise, to help Napoleon.

"My excellent mother is a woman with brain and heart," he would often say. "She has a virile, proud and noble temperament. I owe her all my fortune, all the good I ever did. . . . I am convinced that all the good and evil in man depends on his mother." [10]

The mother knew her son's worth. "You are a miracle, a phenomenon, you are something it is impossible to express," she would naïvely tell him to his face. "Signora Letizia, you flatter me, like everybody else!" "I flatter you? No, my son, you are not fair to your mother. A mother does not flatter her son. You know, Sire, that in public I pay you every respect, because I am your subject; but when we are alone, I am your mother and you are my son. When you say 'I want,' I reply 'I do not,' because I, too, am proud." [11]

On his deathbed he recalled the lessons in pride he had received from his mother in his childhood, and which he had adhered to all his life.[12] During the Terror in Corsica in 1793, she had an offer to betray her vanquished friends in order to save her property and perhaps also hers and her children's lives. Like a true Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, she replied: "I and my children hold not two faiths but one: duty and honour!" [13]

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[10] O'Meara, II.
[11] Lacour-Gayet. Chuquet I.
[12] *Mémorial*, II.
[13] *Ibid*.

"You are deeply attached to me," Napoleon said shortly before his death to Dr. Antommarchi: "You do not spare yourself to alleviate my sufferings. But that is not the same as a mother's care. Oh, Maman Letizia, Maman Letizia! . . ." and he would bury his face in his hands.[14]

A year before Napoleon's birth, a revolt broke out in Corsica against the French, to whom the Island was sold by its life-long oppressors, the Genoese. The old Corsican "Father," *Babbo*, Pasquale Paoli became the leader of the revolutionaries. He was joined by Charles Buonaparte. The eighteen-year-old signora Letizia, in the sixth month of her pregnancy with her second son Napoleon—the eldest was Joseph—was her husband's companion through all the dangers of this perilous campaign. Losses, privations, fatigue—she bore them all, was ready for all. "It was a man's head on a woman's body," recalled Napoleon.[15]

Amid the wild mountains and dense forests, sometimes on horseback, sometimes on foot, climbing over precipices, creeping through the prickly brushwood of the Corsican "macci," fording rivers, hearing bullets whizzing over her head, she carried one child in her arms and another beneath her heart, and knew no fear.

Once she was nearly drowned in the river Liamone. The ford was deep; the horse lost its footing and carried away by the rapid current began to drift. Letizia's companions were frightened, and swam after, shouting to her to throw herself in the water and then they would save her. But the fearless horsewoman secured

[14] Antommarchi, I.
[15] *Ibid.*

herself in the saddle and guided the horse so adroitly that they reached the bank safely. Who knows, if even then she was not transmitting to Napoleon her wonderful courage—the firmness of the Holy Rock, Pietra-Santa.

She feared nothing for him; she bore the infant beneath her heart as calmly and joyfully as later she nursed him in her arms; she had dedicated him to the Holy Virgin Mary and knew She would keep him safe.

The day of the final defeat of the Corsican patriots at Poute-Nuovo, Signora Letizia felt the child stir impatiently, leap in her womb, "as if it wanted to fight before it was born." [16]

The war was far too unequal. The French troops overran Corsica. After the final defeat of the rebels and Paoli's flight, Charles Buonaparte realizing that it had been a war of "the earthen vessel against the leaden cauldron," decided to surrender to the French and having obtained from them a safe conduct, returned with his wife to Ajaccio.

On the 15th August 1769, the festival of the Assumption, Signora Letizia on her way to church suddenly felt the pangs of birth and was obliged to hasten home. Barely reaching her room, she had not even time to go to bed, but fell on to a narrow, hard, uncomfortable, straight-backed sofa, and was there easily delivered of a son, Napoleon.

The mother had no milk. A nurse was hired, Camilla Jlary, the wife of an Ajaccio boatman. She learnt to love Napoleon more than her own son. He too kept her memory green all his life.

[16] Chuquet, I.

On his deathbed at St. Helena he recalled his childhood's years in Corsica. How boldly he scaled the rocks above the precipices, penetrated into deep valleys and narrow gorges; everywhere he met with honourable and joyful hospitality from his kinsmen whose fierce blood-feuds and *vendetta* went back to the seventh generation. "There everything is better than anywhere else in the world. If I closed my eyes I would know my native land by its smell, nowhere have I met with the like." [17] The Spirit of the Earth had entered into him with this smell and forsook him only with his last breath; that which we call Napoleon's genius is this very Spirit of the Earth.

What is Corsica? "The world still in chaos; a tumult of mountains separating narrow gorges in which torrents are roaring; not a single plain—only gigantic billows of granite or earth overgrown with prickly brushwood and tall pine and chestnut forests. Here all is primeval, wild and deserted, save for small hamlets scattered here and there like a heap of boulders on the crest of a hill. No agriculture, no industry, no art. One never comes across a piece of carved wood or sculptured stone; nothing to remind one of the childlike or refined taste of one's ancestors for beautiful or homely things. What strikes one most in this stern and beautiful land is the hereditary indifference to that search for tempting shapes which is called art." [18] "Islanders," says Napoleon, "always possess some originality of their own due to their *isolation* which safeguards them from the constant invasions and fusions to which continental peo-

[17] *Mémorial*, II.
[18] Maupassant, *Le Bonheur*.

ples are subjected." "Island" means "isolation," and "isolation" means "strength." This Napoleon knew better than anyone else.

It would seem as if the Holy Mother Herself had surrounded Her beloved Island by a double barrier—the height of the mountains and the expanse of waters guard it from our impurities, "progress" and "civilization." Here everything is wild, virginal, deserted and innocent, untouched and unsullied by man, everything is as it was when it left the Creator's hands. Human emotions are as pure and fresh as the springs gushing direct from the granite cliffs. Immemorial antiquity—the dawn of the world. The bleating of sheep, the hum of bees are the same as in the halcyon days, when the infant god drank the milk of Amalia the goat-nurse and was fed on the honey of the mountain blossoms by the bees of Melissa. The sun, the sea and rocks are all the same too; even as they were on the first day of creation and will be on the last.

Mother Earth is Napoleon's principal and only teacher. The mountains speak of pride, the sun teaches tenderness, the sea—freshness. Maman Letizia merely repeats and explains the lessons.

"I was a tomboy, a fighter and a troublesome lad." [19] His good natured lout of an elder brother, Joseph, became his abject slave. The little "bandit," *rabullione*, scratched, pinched and bit his brother, and before the other knew where he was, the offender complained of him to their mother.[20] "Maman Letizia subdued my fury." She was stern in her tenderness and dealt out

[19] Antommarchi, I.
[20] *Mémorial*, I.

rewards and punishment with equal justice; good and bad were all taken into account. [21]

One day in a fit of temper he refused to go to church, and only after his mother had boxed his ears, he understood that good little boys were expected to go to church. Another time he asked to accompany her to some neighbours, which she refused. After walking some distance up a steep mountain path, she turned and perceived him following her. She ran down to him and gave him such a smack across the face that he fell and rolled down the path, but managed to scramble to his feet, crying bitterly and wiping his eyes with his fists. Maman Letizia, however, taking no notice of him, went on her way.[22] She knew what she was about: the Bandit could not be tamed with lesser sternness.

"I was merely an obstinate and inquisitive child," recalled Napoleon.[23] Inquisitive and thoughtful. "From his earliest childhood he was uncommonly thoughtful," is Stendhal's description of his hero, Julien Sorel, Napoleon's double.[24]

Full of spirits and mischief, then suddenly quiet and brooding. Sharp and quick beyond his years. "I read the 'New Heloise' when I was nine, and it turned my head." [25] At eight he fell in love with his seven-year-old school-fellow Giacominetta. All his life long he remembered this, his first and perhaps best love. Giacominetta was one of his two ladyloves; the second was mathematics. He studied it so passionately that it seemed a

[21] Lacour-Gayet.
[22] Chuquet, I.
[23] Antommarchi, I.
[24] Stendhal, *Le rouge et le noir.*
[25] Roederer.

pity to disturb him. A little cabin of hoarding was put up for him behind the house, and there, deep in calculations, he spent his days, going out in the evenings to wander plunged in reverie down the street, never heeding that his hose—*calcetti*—slipped down to his heels. The street urchins would follow him shouting:

> Napoleon of the mezza calzetta
> Is the swain of Giacominetta.

He generally took no notice of them, but sometimes would stop suddenly, as if waking from a deep sleep, and shook a stick, threw stones or rushed after them with clenched fists, no matter how many they were.[26]

Already he had begun to be plunged in his "lethargic preoccupation," his "magnetic" sleep.[27]

In 1777, thanks to the patronage of Count Marbeuf, the French Governor of Corsica, Charles Buonaparte, was elected Deputy of the Corsican Nobility at the French *Etats Généraux*. This enabled him to obtain royal stipends for his two sons—for Joseph at a theological seminary in Autun, and for Napoleon at the military school in Brienne.

On the 15th December 1779, Buonaparte with his two sons embarked from Ajaccio for Marseilles, and a few days later, after a favourable crossing, the ten-year-old Napoleon for the first time stepped on French soil. On the 1st January, he and Joseph were admitted to

[26] Chuquet, I.

[27] Constant, IV. "Préoccupation pour ainsi dire létchargique." Bourrienne, IV. "Une sorte de prévision magnétique de ses futures destineés."

the school at Autun, where he remained for three months to learn French of which he could not speak a word. As his father had left for Versailles, it was strangers who in May transferred the little Napoleon to Brienne.

II

SCHOOL DAYS

1779—1785

After the rose tinted, sunlit mountains and the darkly-flaming, purple bays of Corsica—the flat and colourless chalk plains of Champagne appeared to Napoleon as the end of the world, a kingdom of Summerian night.

A crowd gathered round the new boy.

"What's your name?"

"Napollionè,"—he pronounced it with the Corsican accent.

"How much?"

"Napollionè."

"There's no such name in the calendar!"

"Not in yours, but there is in ours."

"A Turkish one, you bet!"

"Napollionè, la-paille-au-nez!" shouted someone, and all took up the joke, singing in chorus amid derisive laughter:

"La-paille-au-nez! La-paille-au-nez! Straw-in-the-nose!" And the nickname stuck.

When the teasing became unbearable, he would fain have rushed at them with clenched fists, alone against them all, as in Ajaccio, but controlled himself out of

contempt. He would draw back with set teeth and taking refuge in a corner would stand glaring at them like a wolf-cub at bay. There was something in the expression of his olive tinted face, in his thin, tightly compressed lips and enormous, melancholy eyes that inspired involuntary awe even in the greatest bullies; to tease him too much might be dangerous—the wolf-cub was surely mad.

He despised and hated all the French whom he considered the oppressors and enslavers of his native Corsica. Perhaps he did not as yet understand the full meaning of this but was already dimly conscious of it. "Corsica gave me life and with life, a passionate love of my fatherland and freedom," the insane hero of his story said afterwards. This hero dwelt on the small island of Gorgon off Corsica, and was the executor of a ghastly vendetta on the whole French nation; he offered to God a human sacrifice—the corpses of Frenchmen slain by himself.

"Your Corsicans are cowards—they surrendered Corsica to us!" the schoolboys were wont to tease Napoleon. He mostly listened in silence, storing up the treasure of hatred in his heart. But one day, extending his arm with the handsome and lofty gesture of an orator of antiquity he replied with calm dignity:

"Had you been four to one, you would never have so much as set eyes on Corsica, but you were ten to one!"

They fell back abashed, for they realized he was speaking the truth.[1]

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[1] Chuquet, I.

"Won't I make it hot for your French as soon as I can!" he told Bourrienne, his only friend from among his school-fellows. And when the latter tried to soothe him, he would add:

"You, for one, never laugh at me, you love me. . . ." [2]

He did not say, "I love you." Already he was precise and chary of his words.

Once he exclaimed with prophetic fervour:

"Paoli will return, he will return, and if alone he cannot break our chains, I'll help him, and together perhaps we shall free Corsica!" [3]

The school was kept by the minor brethren, the monks of the Franciscan order. "Brought up among monks, I had ample opportunities to observe their vices and corruption," Napoleon said after. One should not attach too much weight to this verdict: it was the fashion for all free-thinkers in those days to denounce monastic morals. The Brienne fathers do not seem to have been as bad as they were made out and the boys' lives were fairly happy. They were well clothed and fed and kindly treated, but the tuition was bad and the moral education still worse. Here, as in other military schools in France, brutal and unchildlike debauchery, concealed under the drawing-room term of "immodesty" was widespread, and everybody knew why pretty boys were called "nymphs." Napoleon, however, remained immune from this evil: his unsociableness was his safeguard. He left school as chaste as he had entered it, and appears to have retained his chastity up to the then mature age of eighteen.

[2] Bourrienne, II.
[3] Chuquet, I.

But from another evil he did not escape. The spirit of atheism penetrated the school walls from the outside world. The ritual of outward piety, lessons in catechism, prayers and fasting, church going and monthly confessions and communion proved no safeguards. "I lost my faith at thirteen," Napoleon recalled later.[4]

Yet having lost it, he would listen in the twilight of the lime walks of the Brienne park to the silvery chime of the *Ave Maria*, and learnt to love it all his life. Perhaps the sound of it reminded him of the lost happiness of his childish faith.

"I lived apart from my comrades. I selected a nook within the school enclosure and there I was free to dream; I was always fond of dreaming. When my comrades wanted to invade my retreat I defended it for all I was worth. Already I felt instinctively that other people's wills must surrender to mine, and that what I liked must be my own. At school I was not popular. It needs time to make oneself beloved, and even when I was doing nothing, I always felt dimly that I had no time to lose.[5]

As yet he did nothing, but already he was preparing for something, hastening somewhere, waiting and hoping for something, and dreaming, dreaming . . . till he became almost frenzied. Already within the grey chrysalis the magic wings of the butterfly were fluttering. "How happy I was then!" he recalled later. In spite of all his sufferings, no longer those of a child,—loneliness, homesickness, humiliations, insults—he was

[4] *Mémorial*, III.
[5] Rémusat, I.

happy as if already conscious of his stupendous destiny.

The rector of the school had allotted a considerable space for pupils' gardens, divided into plots. Napoleon joined two neighbouring plots to his own, surrounded them with a high fence and planted them with shrubs; he looked after and watered them so well that after two years they grew tall and shady and formed a green arbour, a "refuge" or "hermitage," as it was then called. This was his "nook." Here he retired, as he had done years ago in the hoarding cabin at the back of the Ajaccio home, to dream and calculate, because already he was building up his insane chimera with mathematical precision, already the fire of imagination was being refracted into a magnificent rainbow through the icy crystals of geometry. "Woe to those of us who dared interrupt his solitude out of curiosity or the wish to tease!" recalled one of his school-fellows. "Furious, he would rush out of his refuge and turn out the uninvited guests, however numerous." [6]

Within this refuge he returned to the natural state—*état naturel*—prescribed by Rousseau. He shunned men and turned to nature: "a man of nature is happy in the bosom of sentiment and natural wisdom," is a later saying of his.[7] Here he experienced all that the mariner in his future romance was to feel, who was cast upon the desert island of Gorgon: "I was king of my island; here I could be if not happy, at least wise and calm." [8] Or else his were the experiences of Napoleon's double—Jules Sorel—in his cavern: "Concealed among the rocks

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[6] Chuquet, I.
[7] Masson, *Napoléon, Manuscrits inédits.*
[8] Masson, *Napoléon, Manuscrits inédits.*

like some bird of prey, he could spot from afar every man approaching his lair. . . . 'Here men cannot harm me,' he would say, his eyes sparkling with joy. 'I am free!' And at the sound of this sublime word, his soul would quiver with rapture." [9] This first conquest of a plot of land is already the beginning of the Napoleonic empire, of world dominion. Here he is as much alone as later at the summit of his glory and at St. Helena.

He was an indifferent scholar; but, as before, he was passionately fond of mathematics. "This boy has capacity only for geometry," was the opinion of his masters.[10] He amazed them by his progress: he grasped the most intricate mathematical problems with a facility which seemed to be an inborn "knowledge—remembrance," the *anamnesis* of Plato, as if he learnt nothing new but merely recalled things long forgotten.

He studied little and read much, absorbing books greedily. He was fascinated by Polibius' history of the world, Arrian's life of Alexander the Great, the "Lives" of Plutarch. He raved about the Leonidases, Catos and Brutuses, "who had amazed mankind." [11] Jean-Jacques, too, was his constant friend with whom he never parted.

His school-fellows hated him more than ever and finally determined to give the Corsican wolf-cub a good lesson.

Desirous of introducing military discipline into the school, the rector formed the pupils into a battalion consisting of several companies each under its own company

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[9] Stendhal, *Le rouge et le noir.*
[10] Rémusat, I.
[11] Chuquet, I.

commander. Among these was Napoleon. However, a council of war was called and a resolution passed: For his lack of respect and affection for his companions, to deprive Bonaparte of his rank of company commander. This sentence was read out to him then and there, his epaulettes torn off, and he was degraded to the rank of a private. He submitted to everything, but accepted the insult with such proud dignity that the boys, surprised at first, grew thoughtful and finally, as if realizing with whom they had to deal, repented of their action. There was a sudden revulsion of public feeling in favour of Napoleon: the despicable "Paille-au-nez" turned out to be a magnanimous Spartan hero. The boys vied with one another to make up to him for the offense and console him. At once he made them understand that he had no need of their pity, but was secretly touched, and from that day became more friendly towards his schoolfellows, gradually began to mix more with them and win their hearts, though never allowing too great an intimacy and still jealously guarding the seclusion of his "nook."

In the snowy winter of 1783, when the school yard was covered with snow-drifts, the boys had merry games. Led by Napoleon, they built a splendid snow fortress with four bastions according to the rules of military technique. One army besieged, the other defended it. Napoleon, whose strategic inventiveness was boundless, commanded both armies in turn and was the life and spirit of both. Only now did the boys realize what a good and merry companion he was and how they could have loved him if he had but let them. But he neither encouraged nor hindered them, as though he did not

much care either way; and this no man, even a child, ever forgives.

He was always the ringleader in all the little school revolutions and revolts against the masters; was very fond of delivering fiery speeches before a revolutionary crowd, like a veritable popular orator, invoking liberty and equality and the Rights of Man in true Jean-Jacques style. Matters generally ended by the frightened school-boys' precipitate retreat while he, the leader, would be left in the lurch alone to bear the consequences. In proud silence, without tears or complaint, he would submit to the lock-up or the rod and betrayed no one. On returning to his companions he never blamed them, but his contempt for them was plainly written on his face: to him they were but miserable, cowering creatures. Soon he will say: "Among men I am always alone. How base and contemptible they are! Life has become a burden to me, because the men I live with and probably am doomed to live with in the future are as different from me as moonlight from sunshine." [12]

One day on being reproved for something by a master, he replied politely and reasonably, but with such self-assurance that the master looked at him in surprise.

"Who are you, sir, to answer like that?" he asked.

"A man," replied Napoleon.

Jean-Jacques might be satisfied with his pupil. The beginning of the Revolution was in that reply of the thirteen-year-old Bonaparte. "The Rights of Man are graven in indelible characters on the human heart by the Creator," he said in 1789.[13]

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[12] Masson, *Manuscrits.*
[13] Masson, *Manuscrits.*

Napoleon spent five years imprisoned in the school at Brienne without once going home or seeing his family. Only once did his father pay him a visit, when he was taking his little daughter Marianne to the convent school of St. Cyr, and left his third son, Lucien, at Brienne in the preparatory form.

Charles Bonaparte merely spent the night at Brienne and left the next day. It was the last meeting between father and son.

Two days later, apparently at his father's request, Napoleon wrote a curious letter to one of his uncles—presumably the future Cardinal Fesch. The boy's character stood out in it to the life.

The letter concerned his brother Joseph who wished to exchange his ecclesiastical career for a military one. Point by point Napoleon proves in detail the foolishness of Joseph's plan, detrimental not only to him but to the whole "family."

"Point one: Our father is right in saying that my brother has not the degree of courage necessary to face danger properly on the field of battle. His weak health will not permit him to endure the hardships of a campaign and in general he looks on military service from a garrison point of view. Yes, my brother will be an excellent officer in time of peace; he is good looking, has a wit well adapted to sociable small-talk and with his gifts he will acquire distinction in every society; but will he on the field of battle? Our father doubts it.

"Qu'importe à des guerriers ce frivole avantage?
Que sont tous ces trésors sans celui du courage?
A ce prix, fussiez-vous aussi beau qu'Adonis,

Du dieu mêone du Pinde eussiez-vous l'éloquence,
Que sont tous ces dons sans celui de la vaillance?

"Point two: My brother has been trained for the church. It is now too late to go back. Monsignor, the Bishop of Autun, would probably offer him a rich parish and assuredly make him a bishop too. How fortunate for the family! Monsignor is doing his utmost to persuade him to remain in the church, promising to make it worth his while. But my brother persists. I should commend him for it, if only his persistence were due to a decisive inclination towards the art of war, the most noble of all, and if that love were ingrained in him, as it was in me, by the Prime Mover of human affairs."

Point three contained an enumeration of all the branches of military service—navy, engineering, artillery, infantry, with arguments proving Joseph's incapacity for them all. "Of course, my brother intends to join the infantry. I can understand this; he wants to do nothing all day but polish the pavements. And what is a junior infantry officer? Usually, a ne'er-do-well, and this would be quite against the wishes of our father and mother, or yours, dear uncle, and those of our uncle the Arch-Deacon, because my brother has already given proofs of his irresponsibility and extravagance. So a final effort will be made to persuade him to continue his training for holy orders, failing which our father will take him back to Corsica to keep an eye on him, and will try to obtain for him employment in the law court." [14]

It is hard to believe this letter to have been written by a boy of fourteen: so clear, cold and hard is its tone.

[14] Masson, *Napoléon dans sa jeunesse.*

Yet not heartless; there is a warmth of feeling underlying the cold words—a love of the family, of his kin, of all those holy ties of blood which bind together the children of Mother Earth.

"I should commend my brother if only his calling for the art of war was inspired in him by the Prime Mover as it is in me,"—these words are like a distant lightning-flash across a stormy sky. Who is this "Prime Mover"? The pallid and inanimate deistic God of Robespierre, or the rising sun—Napoleon's Destiny? Destiny or God—the boy believes that He it was Who inspired his calling for the art of war. His whole fate is contained in those words as a mighty oak in an acorn.

"Monsieur de Bonaparte, Napoléon: Height 4 feet, 10 inches, strongly built, excellent health; obedient; docile, honourable, grateful; unimpeachable conduct; with a decided inclination for mathematics; a fair knowledge of history and geography; very weak in *belles lettres*. Will be an excellent sailor; deserves to be transferred to the school in Paris." Such was the testimonial given to Napoleon in 1784 by General de Keralio, Chief Sub-Inspector of the French Royal Military Schools.[15]

Napoleon was not destined to become a sailor. Posts in the navy were rare and could be obtained only through influential patrons. Besides Signora Letizia feared the service which presented the double danger of fire and water. Rather against the grain, the boy resolved to join the artillery. He was loth to part with his dream of the sea, as if already he had a foreboding

[15] Bourrienne, I. Masson, *Napoléon dans sa jeunesse.*

that all his life long he would fight on land for sea power. "Oh! if only I were lord of the sea!" he said at St. Helena.[16]

"October 30th, 1784, went to school in Paris," is the entry in young Bonaparte's laconic notes entitled "Epochs of my life." [17]

Together with other pupils of the Brienne school he was brought to Paris in a mail coach by the minor brethren. In Paris the young Corsican "was like one of those provincial loafers who are delivered of their purses by street pickpockets." [18]

The Royal Military School for gentlemen-cadets was a palatial building with brown columns and gilded railings erected on the Champ de Mars in the reign of Louis XV.

"We were excellently cared and catered for, like wealthy officers, and lived in far greater luxury than at home or than we could afford later," Napoleon recalled afterwards.[19]

His life in Paris differed little from that in Brienne: the same military discipline and outward religious practices; the same careless studies and insatiable reading; the same intense hatred of the French and desperate homesickness. The newness lay in the acute sense of inequality: the youthful scions of ancient families, the princes de Rohan, the dukes of de Lavalle-Montmorency looked down with contempt on the impoverished Corsican nobleman. But he would not allow himself to be insulted; he retaliated with his fists.

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[16] Lacour-Gayet, *Napoléon.*
[17] Masson, *Napoléon dans sa jeunesse.*
[18] Arthur Lévy, *Napoleon Intime.*
[19] Chuquet, I.

"Didn't I box their ears!" he would say delightedly many years later.

Here too he tried to appropriate to himself a "refuge." Once, when his room mate fell ill and was moved into hospital, Napoleon also pleaded illness and obtained leave to keep his room; he laid in some provisions, locked himself up, closed the shutters, pulled down the blinds and spent two or three days in complete solitude and darkness, reading and dreaming by candlelight. This darkened room in Paris was the counterpart of the little hoarding cabin of Ajaccio and of the Brienne "hermitage," a metaphysical retreat, a "cave," an "island"—the sacred enclosure round his personality. "He is always alone on the one side, with the whole world on the other," will be his later comment on a great man—himself.[20]

One of his school-fellows made a caricature of him; the childish drawing is bad but curious: Napoleon is depicted as a giant with a monstrous face, dressed in the long tunic of the cadet, with a small cocked hat and a pig-tail; a dwarf-like master has seized him by the pig-tail and is trying to hold him back; but the giant stalks along with a heavy cudgel in his hand and with such a heavy tread that the earth seems to tremble beneath his feet. Underneath is the inscription: "Bonaparte flies to Paoli's assistance, to save him from his foes." [21]

A portrait of Napoleon in his youth has reached us.[22]

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[20] Rémusat, *Mémoires*, I.
[21] Rémusat, *Mémoires*, I.
[22] Lacour-Gayet.

In spite of de Keralio's testimony, the face looks delicate; with sunken cheeks and enormous, deep-set eyes, with the immovable stare of a lunatic, it is the face of a man consumed by an inner fire. Long, flat hair hanging straight down to the shoulders; a large eagle-nose. There is no smile on the thin, tightly-compressed lips; if there were, one would expect it to be the charming, mysterious smile of Signora Letizia—the smile of the Gioconda or the Etruscan Sybil. The most marked feature of that face is will-power. "I always do what I say, or die." [23]

On the 24th February, 1785, Charles Bonaparte died at Montpellier from cancer in the stomach.

"Console yourself, my mother, circumstances demand this of you," Napoleon wrote to Letizia. "We shall redouble our care of you and our gratitude, and shall deem ourselves happy if our obedience compensates you if only in a small measure for the irreparable loss of a beloved husband."

He also writes to his uncle and guardian, the Arch-Deacon Lucien: "We have lost a father, and God alone knows what a father. . . . Alas, everything pointed to him as the mainstay of our youth. But the Supreme Being ordained otherwise. His will is omnipotent." [24]

It is the same coldness as in the letter about his brother Joseph, and underneath the icy crust bubbles the fiery spring of love for "his own kin." "I live only for my own kin," he said in one of the bitterest moments of his life.[25] When he tells his mother: "We will re-

[23] Miot de Mélito, *Mémoires*, ed. 1880 "J'éxécute toujours ce que je dis, ou je meurs."
[24] Lévy.
[25] Masson, *Napoléon et sa famille*, I.

double our care of you," these are not empty words. With the first news of his father's death, he feels himself to be the head of the family. Bravely he puts his childish shoulders to the burden of maturity. "I bore the world on my shoulders," he said anon.[26] Already the lad of fifteen tries to lift the burden of the world.

On the 28th October, 1785, Napoleon left the Military School in Paris and was gazetted Lieutenant of Artillery in the regiment of La Fère.

[26] Lacour-Gayet.

III

THE LIEUTENANT OF ARTILLERY

1785—1792

The regiment was quartered in Valence, a small town in the province of Dauphiné near the borders of Savoy.

Those were hard days for Napoleon, much harder than at school. Everything had to be learnt from the very beginning; the gentlemen-cadets left the Military School without any practical knowledge: they were unable to load a musket properly, much less man a gun.

Artillery training, starting according to regulations from the lowest grades of private gunner, N. C. O., corporal and sergeant, lasted as long as the colonel-commander thought fit and depended on the capacities and diligence of the cadet.

Bonaparte went through the whole training in three months. He spent whole days on the Valence shooting range learning to manœuvre, to put up batteries and man howitzers, mortars and falconets; attended lectures on higher mathematics, trigonometry, integral and differential calculus, applied physics, chemistry, pyrotechnics, fortification and tactics. He would eat a hurried meal at the modest inn of The Three Pigeons, or hastily swallow two rolls at the baker's, drink off a

tumbler of water, throw two *sous* in silence on the counter and return to work. He worked sixteen hours a day.

He lodged with Mademoiselle Bou, an old maid and the proprietress of a café-club, who let him a small room on the ground floor next to the billiard room, whence continually could be heard the click of the balls and the shouts of the scorer.

"Do you know the life I led then?" he would recall afterwards. "I never showed my face either in the café or in society, ate dry bread and myself brushed my clothes so that they should wear longer. Not wishing to be conspicuous for my poverty among my companions, I lived like a bear, always alone in my little room with no other friends but my books. Yet even these cost me dear! To purchase even these joys I had to deprive myself of many necessities. When at last at the cost of many privations I saved up some ten francs, I would race to the book shop. How often, though, in looking through the books on the shelves, I sinned through envy and would be consumed with longing because my purse could not afford to buy a book. Such were the unholy joys of my youth!" [1]

"I have no pleasures here except work," he writes to his mother. "I wear my new uniform once a week, sleep uncommonly little, go to bed at ten and get up at four, have only one meal a day: it is good for my health." [2]

"I know the meaning of poverty," the Emperor said proudly. "When I had the honour of being a lieutenant, I ate dry bread and locked my door so that none should see how poor I was." [3]

[1] Lacour-Gayet.
[2] Lévy.
[3] *Ibid.*

Poor, shy and savage. "Humiliated and insulted. . . . Unloved by his superiors and companions . . . who say that his temper in society is unbearable." [4] "He leads the life of an ascetic or a Spartan. Despises love: 'I consider love to be detrimental to society or to personal happiness. If the gods would free the world from love, they would bestow a boon on humanity.' 'What would you do to defend your country?' he asks a love-sick youth in a dialogue on love. 'What is the use of you? The state, citizenship, public welfare—what care you for these? A look, a hand pressure, a kiss, and your country's sufferings are nothing to you!' " [5]

But seventeen years will claim their due. At the house of Mme. Colombier, the lioness of Valence, he met her sixteen-year-old daughter Caroline and fell in love. "Nothing could be more innocent than our love-making. We met in secret. I remember one such meeting in the dawn of a mid-summer's day. It is hard to believe it, but all our bliss consisted in eating cherries together." [6]

This child love passed away like the shadow of a summer cloud, and once more he was alone. He no longer had any need to retire to his nook: he was by now as lonely in the world as on a desert island. "Always alone in the midst of men," he writes in his diary, "I go back home that I may give myself up to my lonely dreams and to the waves of my melancholy. Whither will my thoughts tend to-night? Towards death! Yet I stand on the threshold of life and may expect to live

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[4] Abrantès, *Mémoires.*
[5] Masson, *Manuscrits.*
[6] *Mémorial,* I.

many, many years . . . and be happy. What demon, then, prompts me to self-destruction? . . . And yet what is there left for me to do in this world? . . . How far removed human beings are from nature! How base they are and contemptible! What will I see when I return to my own country? Men in chains, trembling and kissing the hands of their oppressors. . . . When the fatherland is gone a patriot's duty is to die." [7]

This is but a momentary weakness, "sentimentality," the first breath perhaps of spring's romance. Five times over he read "The Sufferings of Young Werther," and the book came to leave an indelible trace upon his soul. Meanwhile young Werther gave way to the ancient Spartan. The first balmy breath of spring was scattered by the fresh gusts of the approaching storm—the Revolution. The disciple of Plutarch and Plato remembered what it behoved him to do, when the fatherland was dead.

"People are forbidden by divine law to rise against their sovereigns? What nonsense! . . . There is no law which the people cannot repeal. . . . By the very nature of a *social contract* the Corsicans possessed the right to overthrow the yoke of the Genoese and equally possess the right to overthrow that of the French. Amen!" [8] "A Social Contract"—*Contrat Social*—this to him is the open sesame, the incantation which will force open the gates of hell. In the open sunlight, on the training ground, he learns the art of war from his superiors; and by candlelight in his poor little room, Jean-

[7] Masson, *Manuscrits.*
[8] Masson, *Manuscrits.*

Jacques teaches him that of revolution; both studies are to serve him well.

In the autumn of 1786 he went home on his first leave and stayed away for nearly two years by special dispensation on the part of his superiors and contrary to all military regulations. Still considering himself as the head of the family since his father's death, he did his utmost to restore some order in Signora Letizia's entangled affairs.

From Corsica he returned not to Valence but to Auxonne, another out-of-the-way little town in the south of France whither his regiment had been transferred.

When on the 16th of August 1789 a mutiny broke out at Auxonne, did Bonaparte realize that a great day had dawned for him? The soldiers came out of the barracks singing revolutionary songs, surrounded the colonel's house and demanded the surrender of the regimental funds; on getting drunk they began embracing the officers, forcing them to drink to liberty and dance the *farandole*.

Bonaparte watched the mutiny with the disgust he always felt for the revolutionary rabble. "Were I ordered to fire at them, habit, prejudice, upbringing, respect for the king's name would force me to obey unhesitatingly." [9]

But this was only one of his two attitudes towards the revolution. Here is the other: "The revolution pleased me and the equality which would help me to rise seemed tempting." [10] Soon he was to realize what

[9] Lacroix, *Histoire de Napoléon.*
[10] Chuquet, II.

his native country stood to gain from the revolution.

"Instantaneously everything was changed," he writes from Corsica. "A spark flared up from the depths of the nation governed by our tyrants. Having freed itself, it wished us also to become free." [11]

"Long live France! Long live the King!" the crowd shouted in the streets of Ajaccio, to the clanging of bells and the crackling of fireworks on receipt of the decree of the National Assembly proclaiming Corsica's admission into the fraternal union of the French nation as an independent and autonomous province.

"France, the magnanimous nation and cradle of liberty!" exclaimed the old Corsican Babbo, Paoli, weeping tears of joy. "Erstwhile we cursed the French as our oppressors; now we bless them as our brothers and liberators. Never more shall we secede from this most excellent government, *questo ora fortunatissimo governo*!" [12]

"Oh! the happy Revolution!" Everyone was affected, both the wise and the foolish. How angelic appeared the face of the new-born monster. Napoleon alone did not deceive himself. "*I believe nothing of all this. Je ne crois rien de tout ceci*," he writes on the margin of Jean-Jacques' speech at Dijon on "The Causes of Social Inequality." But the heart whispered words different from those on his lips. "Man! Man! how contemptible thou art in slavery, how great in freedom! . . . Regenerated, thou art indeed the lord of Nature!" Thus he raved intoxicated, or pretending to be intoxicated, by the wine of Revolution.

[11] Masson, *Manuscrits.*
[12] Chuquet, II.

Meanwhile "the lord of nature" continued to live as before in the poor little barrack-room at Auxonne, as if no revolution had ever taken place. A room with one window, scantily furnished with a narrow uncurtained bedstead, a plain deal table littered with books and papers, a trunk also filled with books, one battered old armchair and six straw chairs. Next door, in a still smaller room with a mattress on the floor instead of a bed, lived his twelve-year-old brother Louis, of whom Napoleon had taken charge to ease Maman Letizia's burden. The elder brother loved the younger with a fatherly tenderness, and spent his last *sous* on him: together they existed on three francs five centimes a day. Napoleon cooked the soup himself and at times they had to content themselves with bread and milk. He taught his brother history, geography, French and catechism; took him to mass every morning and prepared him for confirmation, although he had lost all faith himself: "Theology is a sewer of every kind of superstition and error." [13]

He was proud of his pupil's progress: "He will be the flower of the family, because not one of us has received such a good education. . . . The boy is charming, and what is particularly fortunate, has got a heart," he wrote to his brother Joseph.[14]

Kept in bed for weeks by intermittent fever contracted in the Auxonne marshes, he continued a prey to endless day-dreams. As in the days of his childhood, his heart was possessed by the same gigantic, bitter-sweet chimera. Had he himself in mind when he wrote in his

[13] Masson, *Manuscrits.*
[14] Masson, *Napoléon et sa famille.*

historical notes: "In 1491 B.C. the Pharaoh Sesostris conquered all Asia and reached India by land and sea"? [15] Or, against logarithms for calculating the trajectory of a cannon ball: "The precious stones sparkling in the war apparel of one of the Persian kings cost 26,000,000 francs"? [16] How alluringly these fairy gems scintillated in the dim light of a tallow candle . . . a Scheherazade with logarithms.

Thought he also of himself when writing of Cromwell: "Courageous, astute, deceitful, consumed by the insatiable fire of ambition, he repudiates his early republican principles and having once tasted of the sweets of power, wants to rule alone"? [17]

And most certainly he means himself when he speaks of the man of genius. "Poor man, how I pity him! He will become an object of wonder and envy to his fellow men and the most miserable of them all. . . . Men of genius are like meteors: they must shine and be consumed that they may lighten the darkness of their age." [18]

And it may be a kind of "magnetic premonition," according to Bourrienne,[19] which stayed his hand, when in enumerating British dominions in Africa, he wrote those four words:

> "*Sainte Hélène, petite île.*" . . .
> (Saint Helena, small island)

Then—a dumb and empty page—Destiny.

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[15] Masson, *Manuscrits.*
[16] *Ibid.*
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] Bourrienne, IV.

In those days, 1791-1793, events in Corsica took the same course as all over France: the old order had crumbled, the new had not come into being, and anarchy reigned supreme. "The happy Revolution" was ended; the angelic face of the new-born was assuming the diabolical aspect of the Terror. The whole land was steeped in blood and fire.

Once again Napoleon is on leave in Corsica. He plunges headlong into revolutionary clubs, committees and conspiracies and makes first-hand acquaintance with war and revolution.

Elected colonel of the Ajaccio volunteer battalion of the National Guard, in the Easter week of 1792, he fanned a spark into flame and turned a street brawl between the soldiers and townspeople over some overturned ninepins, into civil war. Locking themselves up in their barracks the volunteers, ostensibly by order of their two colonels Quenza and Bonaparte, started firing from the windows at the passers-by, killing some women and children, then raided and plundered houses, seized a whole district, and incited the neighbouring peasants and shepherds to revolt. The town was besieged by them and food supplies stopped. Bonaparte's object was to capture the fortress of Ajaccio. He failed, but for three days the town suffered all the horrors of an enemy invasion—famine, plunder, murder and terror. Long did the citizens remember the Easter bloodshed of 1792, and never forgave him. "Napolione Buonaparte was the cause of it all," said the deputy Pozzo di Borgo. "There exist charges sufficient to condemn him thirty times over; the defiled laws and humanity must be avenged and the

blood-thirsty tiger muzzled!" [20] "See you this little man? He is two Mariuses and one Sulla combined!" *i.e.*, two bandits and one usurper, says Paoli.

When calm was restored with the arrival of two Commissaries from the Regional Directory, Bonaparte presented them with a report in which he justified his actions by the necessity to defend liberty from counter-revolution.

"In the terrible situation in which we found ourselves courage and daring were essentia[1]; a man was needed who, having fulfilled his duty, could reply like Cicero and Mirabeau upon oath that he did not outstep the law: 'I swear that I saved the Republic.' " Such a man, of course, was Bonaparte himself. But "here men's souls are too puny to rise to the level of great deeds," he concludes his justification.[21]

What are these "great deeds"? Perhaps he has no clear idea of them, only semi-consciously hopes that the seizure of the fortress of Ajaccio will make him master of Corsica, enable him to restore order and lay the foundation of his life's work—to bridle the chaos of the revolution. Already the hands of the infant Zeus, still in his cradle, are closing round the Python's slimy neck, but as yet have not sufficient strength to strangle the monster: it slipped from the childish grasp.

"I would advise you to return to France," wrote his brother Joseph. Napoleon obeyed [22] and in the beginning of May was back in Paris.

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[20] Chuquet, II.
[21] *Ibid.*
[22] *Ibid.*

A complaint against Bonaparte for the "Ajaccio Easter" was sent from Corsica to the War Ministry. He was threatened with court martial. But the case was transferred to the Ministry of Justice and there fell into oblivion. Having been struck off the roll for illegal prolongation of his furlough he was obliged to take steps to be reinstated in the service. Thanks to the patronage of his fellow-countrymen, the Corsican deputies, he succeeded: he was not only re-admitted to his regiment but was promoted captain of artillery with full payment of his salary during all these months of absence.

Still, all these successes failed to console him for the failure of his Ajaccio experiment. He was disappointed in the Revolution. He wrote to Joseph: "Do you remember what happened at Ajaccio? Here mediocre men are at the head of affairs. It is the same in Paris. Perhaps here, men are still more wicked and despicable, greater slanderers and quenchers of the spirit. Each seeks his own profit and attains it by base means. . . . All this kills ambition. . . . To lead a quiet life, content with one's family happiness, is the best one can do on four or five thousand francs a year." "Really, people are not worth so much trouble to gain their love." [23]

On the 20th June, 1792, standing on the Tuileries terrace overlooking the Seine, he hears the ominous clang of the tocsin and sees a mob of seven or eight thousand people armed with axes, pikes, swords, muskets, spits and sharp-pointed sticks marching to the assault of the Palace; judging by their speech and

[23] Chuquet, III.

faces they belong to "the vilest and most stinking rabble." [24] And after the mob has rushed the Palace, he sees at one of the windows King Louis XVI wearing a red cap and surrounded by the rabble. "*Che coglione*!" whispers Bonaparte, pale with fury; "how could they let them in? A whiff of grape-shot would dispose of three or four hundred, and the rest would bolt!" [25]

On the 10th August, on his way to the Place du Carrousel, he meets a group of men "of mean aspect," carrying a head stuck on the point of a lance. Judging him by his clothes to be a "gentleman," they approach him and order him to shout "Long live the people!" "The Palace was besieged by the vilest rabble, *la plus vile canaille*." After it was taken and the King led away to the Assembly, Bonaparte penetrated into the garden filled with the bodies of the slain Swiss guard. "Whether from its small space or because I saw this for the first time, no field of battle ever produced on me such an impression of a quantity of corpses. I saw decently clad women shamelessly insulting them." He visits all the cafés in the neighbourhood of the Assembly "Fury possessed all hearts and was reflected in every face." [26] His own excited suspicion by its too great calm; he was eyed askance.

He writes to one of his uncles in Corsica: "Events are moving faster; your nephews will know how to make headway." [27] This means: "The Revolution was after my own heart, and equality, which would serve my promotion, tempted me." "Man, thou wast a slave and yet

[24] Chuquet, III.
[25] Arthur Lévy.
[26] Masson, *Napoléon dans sa jeunesse.*
[27] Chuquet, III.

couldst live? Awake, now or never! The cock has crowed, the signal is hoisted; forge the dagger of vengeance out of thy chains." Thus, sober himself, he raves with the drunken. "I believe in none of all this," he might have added, as on the margin of Jean-Jacques' Dijon harangue.

He does not believe in the Revolution, loathes it; yet, a new Romulus, hungrily seeks the she-wolf's nipples; himself—a mad wolf-cub, he will bite them till they ooze blood, but he will drink his fill of the she-wolf's milk.

Nor does he consider his cause as lost in Corsica. He returns thither in the autumn of 1792. Two main factions are warring on the island; one stands for secession from France, the other for union. Paoli is the secret leader of the first; Napoleon, with his brothers Lucien and Joseph, joins the other.

After the execution of Louis XVI, on the 21st January, 1793, Bonaparte tells the Commissary of the Convention in Corsica: "I have thought over our situation. We are ready here to make a mess of things. Of course the Convention has committed a crime, which I personally deplore more than anyone else; but whatever happens, Corsica must be united to France," which means "united to the Revolution." [28]

Thus Bonaparte and Paoli have crossed one another on a narrow path, where they can no longer go each his separate way; one of them is bound to fall.

The headstrong eighteen-year-old lad Lucien Bonaparte in playing with fire, explodes a powder-magazine;

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[28] Lacour-Gayet.

without consulting his brothers and through the Republican Society in Toulon, he turns informer against Paoli before the Convention, accusing him of counter-revolution, secret communications with England and the intention of seceding from France to become the Dictator of Corsica. "To the guillotine!" roared Marat, and Paoli's arrest was voted by the Convention.

The young scapegrace is triumphant. "I've dealt a death blow to our enemies. You never expected this!" he writes to his brothers.[29] The letter was intercepted and brought to Paoli. "The little viper, *briconcello*!" he exclaimed contemptuously.[30] He never doubted that this was Napoleon's doing.

The latter, however, was himself taken unawares: he did not expect such rapid developments and was unprepared. He drew up an address to the Convention from the Ajaccio Patriots' Club exonerating Paoli from the "calumny." He may have wished to regain his favour. But Paoli, learning of this exclaimed with as much contempt for him as for the "little viper" Lucien: "As if I care for his friendship! *Poco mi preme di sua amicizia*!" [31] The lion-cub was already showing his claws, when Paoli still thought he was playing with a lap-dog.

Neither did Napoleon spare his former idol: he sent a report against him to Paris reiterating all Lucien's "calumnies" and adding for himself: "What fatal ambition has marred the discernment of this sexagenarian! Beatitude is in his countenance but ferocity in his

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[29] Masson, *Napoléon et sa famille*, I.
[30] Chuquet, III.
[31] Chuquet, III.

soul; unction in his glance but gall in his heart." [32]

To arrest Paoli in Corsica was no easy task: she rose as one man to defend her old Babbo.

The masks were torn off. Paoli proclaimed himself "Generalissimo" and Dictator of Corsica and summoned a national assembly, *Consulta*, in the town of Corte. Here the Bonaparte brothers were proclaimed "traitors" and "enemies of the fatherland," and delivered to "eternal damnation" and shame.

Napoleon, realizing that there was no longer any room for him in Corsica, fled from Ajaccio to Bastia to join the Commissaries of the Convention, and warned his mother: "Prepare to leave: this country is not for us. *Preparate vi: questo paeso non e per noi.*" [33]

Signora Letizia also fled to the mountains with the younger children, just as she had done four and twenty years ago when she bore Napoleon beneath her heart. The fugitives left the town at night and in the early morning reached the nearest heights from which it could still be seen. Someone turning round saw rising columns of smoke and pointed them out to Signora Letizia: "Look, your house is burning!" "Let it burn, we will build a better one," the "mother of the Gracchi" is alleged to have replied. And they did.[34]

On the 11th June, 1793, Napoleon together with his family boarded a French warship and two days later landed in Toulon.

Henceforward he is a man without a fatherland:

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[32] *Ibid.*
[33] Chuquet, III.
[34] Lacroix, *Napoléon.*

Corsica ceased to be that for him, and France never became one. Out of the fatherland he was now born into the universe.

At first Maman Letizia with the children settled down in La-Valette, a suburb of Toulon, and later in Marseilles where she lived in abject poverty. Napoleon's sisters, the future Duchess of Tuscany and the Queen of Naples, it was said, went out to wash their linen with the washerwomen of Marseilles.

Napoleon rejoined his regiment at Nice, served first in the coastal battery and afterwards was sent to Avignon with a munition transport. On the way there he fell into the thick of a skirmish between the troops of the Convention and the rebel Marseillais who occupied Avignon. Bonaparte assisted General Carteaux to recapture the town, and prepared to return to his regiment through Marseilles. He failed to reach it, however: Destiny—the Morning Star—awaited him at Marseilles.

On the way to Marseilles he writes a political pamphlet, the first edition of which was published at his expense, and the second at the cost of the nation, entitled "The Supper of Monsieur Beaucaire," in the form of a conversation between four civilians and a soldier—Bonaparte himself—casually brought together round a supper table at an inn. In it he tries to prove that the rebel Marseillais who rose against the Convention and sold themselves to England, were traitors to the Revolution; he urges them to return to her maternal bosom; assures them that the *montagrards* are not "bloodthirsty monsters," but "impeccable and faithful friends

of the people who dealt with the Marseillais as with erring children." [35]

"I believe nothing of all this," he might have added again. But in Rome do as the Romans do, or, as he used then to say: "Better swallow than be swallowed." [36]

The she-wolf howls but suckles the wolf-cub, and the teeth are growing sharper, which perhaps will devour her, his foster-mother.

On the 26th September, 1793, the Corsican Deputy in the Convention, Salicetti, a friend of Bonaparte, wrote from Toulon to the Committee of Public Safety in Paris: "Captain Dommartin is wounded and we are left without a commander of artillery. Chance, however, has miraculously come to our rescue: we detained citizen Buonaparte, a very able captain, who was journeying to rejoin the army of Italy, and bade him take up Dommartin's duties." [37]

Thus did Bonaparte find himself before the walls of besieged Toulon.

"There," says Las Cases in the *Mémorial*, "history henceforth takes possession of him, never to forsake him. There, is the beginning of his immortality." [38]

[35] Chuquet, III.
[36] Chuquet, III.
[37] Masson, l.c. I.
[38] *Mémorial.* I.

IV

TOULON

1793—1794

"War is a strange art: I fought sixty big battles and learnt nothing beyond what I knew already at the first," Napoleon said at St. Helena.[1]

This wonderful innate "knowledge—remembrance" prior to all experience, the *anamnesis* of Plato, is first revealed in him at the siege of Toulon. "Who taught him? How does he know it all?" experienced military experts asked themselves at the headquarters at Toulon, as did the teacher of mathematics at the school in Brienne; to them also it seemed as if he learnt nothing new but merely recalled things long since familiar.

When this twenty-four-year-old captain of artillery, thin, slight, long-haired like a girl of sixteen, but of commanding mien and calmly-compelling eye, made his appearance at headquarters, everyone suddenly felt that they had found their master.

To realize the full portent of Bonaparte's achievement at Toulon, it is necessary to understand the difficulties he had to contend with.

The encampment of Toulon with its powerful for-

[1] Gourgaud, II.

tifications and splendid harbours was considered to be one of the most impregnable positions in the world. It was further reenforced by the presence of the powerful Anglo-Spanish fleet and English artillery.

Driven to desperation by the Terror, Toulon, like Marseilles, rebelled against the Convention and went over to the English; it would have sold itself to the devil, if only to escape from the wolfish jaws of Marat. The town held out gallantly; the siege became protracted; it was too hard a nut for the Convention to crack.

About a quarter of the Republican troops consisted of drunken, beggarly ruffians who infected the other three quarters. The *morale* of the army was low, discipline undermined. "Everything was chaos and lawlessness," Napoleon recalled later. Two hundred "representatives of the people," who flocked to the camp from the neighbouring Jacobin clubs—two hundred chatterers and ignoramuses, interfering everywhere with their war plans and suspicions of counter-revolution, completed the army's disruption. But worst of all, perhaps, was the senior-in-command himself, General Carteaux, a man absolutely ignorant of military science and possessed of that particular stupidity acquired by people during revolutions when mass folly is added to their own. This *sans-culottes* general, of martial appearance, "gilt from head to foot," and puffed up with revolutionary swagger, strutted about among the crowd of deputies, like a rooster in a hen-coop.

"What can I do for you, citizen?" was his pompous greeting to Bonaparte.

The latter handed him the order for his appointment.

"Too late," replied Carteaux twirling his moustache. "We need no one else. Though, by the way, you are welcome. To-morrow Toulon will be burnt down, and you will share our glory without any trouble." [2]

With that prophetic clairvoyance which was the essence of his military genius, Napoleon realized at once that the sole key to Toulon lay in the Fort of Eguillette, situated in the Caire promontory, the outlet between the Big and Little harbours. "If we capture Eguillette, we shall be in Toulon within eight days," he kept repeating for three months to all and sundry. But it was not so easy to make General Carteaux understand this.

"Toulon is here!" Bonaparte exclaimed once, pointing to Eguillette on the map.

"Geography does not seem to be the young man's strong point," the General whispered, nudging his neighbour.[3]

Later, when the attack on the Eguillette was insisted upon by the deputies of the Convention, Carteaux suspected treason and kept repeating anxiously that the key to Toulon was not there. Fortunately his wife was cleverer than himself.

"Let this young man alone," she said naively. "He knows much more than you do, asks nothing of you and reports on all he does. In the event of success, the glory will be yours, and if he fails, he will be responsible." [4]

The two deputies of the Convention who were attached to the army, Gasparin and the Corsican Salicetti, were charmed with Bonaparte, as were all over whom he

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[2] *Mémorial*, I.
[3] Chuquet, III.
[4] *Mémorial*, I.

chose to cast his spell. With their support he gradually set aside Carteaux and assumed complete control over the army. The actual commander-in-chief during the siege was Bonaparte alone.

When the Committee of Public Safety decided to concentrate all the Southern armies against Toulon and appointed the old and experienced General Dugommier to succeed Carteaux, Bonaparte breathed a sigh of relief. Dugommier, like both the deputies, was charmed with him and in opposition to the Convention adopted his plan of action.

Such miracles were accomplished in the army by this little captain of artillery that people could scarcely believe their eyes: order emerged out of chaos, the turbulent forces of the Revolution shaped themselves into the orderly elements of war, the cut-throat *sans-culottes* ruffians were transformed into brave and honest soldiers: he won them over by a quiet look, a timely word or joke, by kindness or rebuke.

With unerring instinct the soldiers recognized in him the Leader and the *Man*, "*l'Homme*" as was their later name for him, simple and sublime. If taken unawares by an unexpected enemy attack, the outpost commanding officers would shout: "Run to Bonaparte, he'll know what to do!" [5] And he did. He knew everything and everyone, saw through all. He appraised every man's value at first sight and assigned him to the right place; selected the best and attached them to his own person. Thus Captain Muiron, the future hero of Arcola, and Sergeant Junot, the future Duke of Abrantès, were pro-

[5] *Mémorial*, I.

moted, also Marmont and Duroc, his future marshals. The General Staff of the Great Army had already come into being.

He kindled them all with his own fire and infected them with his ardour, courage and prodigious activity. He was all things to all men: foot soldier, trooper, sapper, gunner. He was unsparing of himself: commanded as a general and went under fire as a private; shared with the men all their hardships, ate black bread, slept on straw, and there, under the guns, practised revolutionary equality and fraternity not in words but in deeds.

Never was he more fearless than at the siege of Toulon. Three horses were killed under him. Calm and unemotional under cannon fire, not a muscle of his face contracting, he merely shouted: "Look out—a bomb!" as if in a mock snowball battle in the school yard at Brienne. Once a bomb passed so near him, that he was knocked down and received shell-shock, but remained under fire.

Another time a gunner was killed beside him on the *Sans-Culottes* battery. He took his place, seized the rammer and began to load the cannon. The gunner was ill with malignant itch and Bonaparte, from touching the rammer, contracted the disease. Engrossed in his work he neglected proper treatment; the illness affected his internal organs and nearly cost him his life.

To this he owed his extreme emaciation and cadaverous mien which for several years until the Consulate, gave him the look of a man stamped with a fatal dis-

ease.[6] But the feeble body was conquered by the indomitable spirit: "I always had complete control over my body." [7]

The battery near Little Gibraltar was so heavily shelled that the men refused to stay there. Bonaparte ordered a little notice-board to be put up with the words: "Battery of the Fearless," and the men vied with each other for the special honour of serving there. But here too the decisive factor was in the act, not the word: the commander was himself foremost in the firing line.

The soldiers loved, "pitied" this thin boy, who looked like a girl and suffered from itch, their own particular *sans-culottes'* disease. At sight of his small, slight figure, black in the midst of the white smoke and red flames of bursting shells, they rushed after him into the fire in a frenzy of devotion with one impulse: "Better die than see that sickly boy killed!"

At a War Council held on the 11th December General Dugommier laid down and carried Bonaparte's plan to capture Fort Eguillette and bombard the English squadron from the Caire promontory, forcing it to abandon both harbours, and thus compel the garrison, no longer backed by the fleet, to evacuate the forts and surrender the town.

After three days of preliminary bombardment it became possible to attempt the assault of the English Redoubt, the key to Fort Eguillette. At 1 o'clock, in the night of the 17th December, in a heavy thunderstorm and torrential rain the Republican Army advanced to

[6] *Mémorial*, I.
[7] Antommarchi, I.

the attack in three columns. As often happens in the darkness, some muddle occurred in the disposition. Two of the attacking columns marched straight towards the redoubt but only a small section of them reached it; the rest dispersed. Suddenly cries arose in the darkness: "Run for your lives! Treason!" and there was a stampede. Picked men, however, held together shoulder to shoulder, and without pausing to think of their numbers, strong in their confidence in themselves and encouraging one another, reached the foot of the promontory, scrambled up the steep incline and overthrew the first line of English and second line of Spanish outposts. Amid deafening peals of thunder mingled with the roar of cannon, as if heaven itself took part in war on earth, they pressed on and on, reached the wall of the redoubt, destroyed the rampart, crossed the trench and abattis, climbed up the parapet, killed the gunners and rushed into the redoubt. Already the shout went up: "Victory! to bayonets!" But at the second abattis composed of numerous traverses, they halted and, swept by a terrific fire, retreated and ran out of the fort through the very embrasure through which they had just penetrated. At once they rallied and charged, again rushed the redoubt and, met by another volley, again retreated. General Dugommier summoned Bonaparte's reserve column. Already Captain Muiron was leading it forward and being well acquainted with all the by-paths, reached the summit of the promontory almost without casualties.

At 3 a.m., after the third and final attack the redoubt was at last captured by the Republicans. Muiron was the first to enter, followed by Dugommier and Bonaparte.

Sergeant Petout, wounded in the leg and shoulder, fell into the moat, but picking himself up at once, rushed into the fray shouting to his gunners: "Come on, lads, come on—we're the 'Fearless Battery' boys!" That name carried home; Sergeant Petout saw it emblazened in the lightning flashes across the lurid sky and heard it in the roll of the thunder.

Firing had ceased in the redoubt, and men were fighting silently at close quarters, man to man and bayonet to bayonet. The English gunners stuck to their guns like grim death until literally hacked to pieces; but their stubborn defence was overcome by the frenzy of the besiegers. The Carmagnols captured the "Redoubt of Hell" as they called it, and a shout of triumph went up from their panting chests: "The redoubt is ours!" [8]

That day Bonaparte gave a proof of his indomitable courage. His horse was killed under him, and he himself received a bayonet wound in the thigh so severe that it was feared his leg would have to be amputated. One scarcely believes it, but that same day he was superintending the instalment of a battery on the Little Gibraltar Fort.

At five in the morning the Carmagnols flushed with triumph went to the assault of Fort Eguillette. Its defence after the fall of the Redoubt was practically impossible and it was soon abandoned by the English.

"To-morrow, or after to-morrow at the latest, we will sup at Toulon," said Bonaparte after the surrender of Eguillette.[9] As yet the army did not believe it possible, but when the forecast was fulfilled, the men could

[8] Chuquet, III.
[9] Chuquet, III.

not get over their amazement; they decided that Bonaparte was a wizard.

On the morning of the 18th the Republicans saw the garrison abandoning nearly all the forts of the Toulon encampment. Towards evening of the same day the noise and clamour which rose from the town announced the enemy's precipitate retreat. At nine o'clock, two terrific explosions, felt like an earthquake shock seven kilometres away, shook the town to its foundations: two Spanish frigates loaded with powder had been blown up in the harbour.

At the same time, Commodore Sidney Smith, whose squadron was being bombarded with shells and incandescent bombs from the Caire promontory, ordered his ships to raise anchor. Fires broke out in all parts of the town: the arsenal, the chief military depot, the rigging and goods stores, and the twelve ships of the French fleet were in flames.

In the ranks of the Carmagnols, who with merry shouts and revolutionary songs were marching to the walls of Toulon, there was a sudden silence. They halted, as if thunderstruck. The blazing hulks of the ships seemed like bonfires on the water; the arsenal enveloped in clouds of smoke and flame was like a volcano in eruption. The sky was ablaze with fire, which turned night into day.

And black against that fiery sky, aflame with the dawn of a new era, was silhouetted the slight and girlish figure of the sickly boy: the world was witnessing the advent of Napoleon.

V

VENDEMIAIRE

1794—1795

He was coming into the world, but the world knew him not; neither perhaps had he a proper knowledge of himself.

His success rejoiced, but "did not astonish" him.[1] With his dim knowledge—*remembrance*, he knew—remembered that this success was but the first step upon a road so long and arduous as no man had ever trod before.

That the surrender of Toulon was due to Bonaparte was known to all the army; Paris alone did not, or would not, acknowledge it. "He must be rewarded and promoted; but if ingratitude is shown him, he will make a way for himself, alone," Dugommier wrote to the War Ministry.[2]

On the 6th February, 1794, the Convention confirmed Bonaparte's promotion to the rank of artillery brigadier general. With this rank he was appointed to the responsible, harassing and insignificant post of inspector of the coastal detachment of the Army of Italy, and received something worse besides.

[1] *Mémorial*, I.
[2] Chuquet, III.

The Army Deputy of the Convention, Robespierre Junior, who was charmed with Bonaparte, as were all in Toulon, urged him to come to Paris, promising to obtain for him, through his brother, the command of the Home Army. This was a great temptation. Bonaparte, however, knew—remembered, that his hour had not yet struck—"the pear was not yet ripe." The fiery youth here acted like an old man congealed by experience. "What have I to do in this devil of a mess?" i.e., the Terror, he replied to Robespierre and refused the offer. Napoleon stands revealed in that refusal, in the full possession of what he later styled as "a well-squared genius," and what was defined by Heraclites as "the union of contrasts"—frigid calculation and fiery passion, Apollo and Dionysos. He builds up his insane chimera with geometrical precision.

The 9th Thermidor came round. Maximilian Robespierre was executed together with his younger brother. "I felt rather sorry at his misfortune, because I was fond of him and believed him to be pure, *pur*," wrote Bonaparte of his erstwhile friend in his customary coldly-didactic style. "But, were even my own father to attempt to become a tyrant, I should stab him." [3] Soon this letter was to prove of good service to him.

The government which Bonaparte served had fallen. A new wave of Terror broke out. The Jacobins to save their own heads turned informers against each other. Salicetti, also a former friend of his, denounced Bonaparte to the Convention, accusing him of conspiring with the Robespierre brothers and drawing up war plans for

[3] Lacroix.

them to betray the Republic to its enemies the Genoese, and restore the destroyed fortifications of that nest of counter-revolution, Marseilles.

The Convention decreed Bonaparte should be summoned for trial. He was arrested on the 12th August and imprisoned in the Fortress of Antibes. He knew that from thence it was but a step to the scaffold; he might easily have evaded himself, but *remembered* this would be a mistake.

He wrote to the Convention: "Have not I been loyal to the Revolution from its very beginning? . . . I sacrificed and lost everything for the Republic. . . . I have deserved the title of patriot. . . . Hear me then, and relieve me of the opprobrium of calumny. . . . But if the villains wish to take my life, I attach little value to it, and have frequently proved my contempt for it. Indeed, only the thought that my life may be of use to my country, gives me courage to bear its burden." [4]

A fortnight later he was released, though not reinstated to his former post but appointed commander of an infantry brigade of the Western Army, in far-off blood-stained Vendée. This practically meant exile; and for refusal to go hither, his name was struck off the list of acting war generals. Such was his reward for Toulon.

The thread of his life had snapped; he was obliged to start again from the very beginning.

He arrived in Paris towards the end of May, 1795. In the army he was already Napoleon, but here in Paris a nonentity, or worse still, a "suspect," a dis-

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[4] Stendhal.

graced general of the Convention. He was reduced to abject poverty, having lost in unsuccessful speculations all the money saved in the army. With nothing to do he paced the streets. Sometimes he would indulge in fits of utter despair. "I am almost ready to give way to the animal instinct which prompts me to suicide. . . ." "I am very little attached to life. My usual state of mind is as if I were on the eve of battle; I am convinced that if death is soon to put an end to everything, it is silly to worry. Everything, in fact, prompts me to challenge fate, and if this lasts much longer, I will simply not make way for an advancing carriage." [5]

"He was the leanest and strangest creature I ever set eyes upon," was a clever woman's description of Bonaparte in those days. "As was then the fashion, he wore *dog's ears*, i.e., immeasurably long hair reaching to his shoulders. . . . His gloomy eye made one think he was a man one would not care to meet at night on the outskirts of a wood. . . . His clothes, too, did not inspire confidence: his threadbare tunic looked so despicable that I had difficulty in believing him to be a general. But I soon saw he was an intelligent, or at any rate an uncommon man. If it were not for his extraordinary thinness which made him look so ill, one might discern that he possessed wonderfully fine features; his mouth particularly was full of charm. . . . Sometimes when recounting the siege of Toulon, he would become very talkative and animated, but otherwise remained grimly silent. . . . Now I think of it, the contours of his

[5] Masson, *Napoléon et sa famille*, I.

mouth, so fine, tender and so firm denoted his contempt for danger and the capacity to triumph over his enemy without rancour." [6]

At this time he was appointed as a minor official to the topographical bureau of the War Chancellery of the Committee of Public Safety, that lion's den of the Terror. Here he presented General Scherer, Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army, with the plan of the Italian campaign which he carried out himself a year later.

This work of military genius, the greatest since the days of Alexander and Caesar, was judged by Scherer to be "an insane chimera, the product of a diseased brain." [7] After this Bonaparte decided to offer his services as artillery instructor to the Sultan in Constantinople: he would rather go to hell than stay in Paris!

After the 9th Thermidor the position of the Convention became untenable. The Royalists and the Jacobins joined forces; the former to strangle the Revolution, the latter to resume the Terror.

On the 12th Vendemiaire, 4th October, thirty out of the forty-eight military sections of Paris with a battalion of the National Guard in each, a total of thirty thousand armed men, mutinied and besieged the premises of the Convention. The Commander-in-Chief of the troops of the Convention, General Menou, not daring to fire on the "sovereign people," opened a parley with the rebels, for which he was declared a traitor and arrested. The deputy Barras was appointed in his place. Being a bad general, he needed an assistant. They then

[6] Stendhal.
[7] Arthur Lévy.

bethought themselves of the Toulon hero, Bonaparte.

Barras sent for him at one o'clock in the morning and offered him the command of the army, a post second only to his own.

"Let me think," said Bonaparte.

"Think, but not for more than three minutes," replied Barras and stood over him waiting for his decision.

Upon those three minutes hung Napoleon's destiny. "Should he become the scapegoat for so many crimes committed by others? Should his name be added to so many names of terror?" [8] To save the Convention was to save the Terror. He had just escaped being devoured by the she-wolf of Revolution; should he again press to her iron nipples? Perhaps he was not thinking of this at the time; was merely hearkening to the low whisper of his Destiny, of his dim "knowledge—remembrance."

At the end of three minutes he replied, "I consent!"

"Bonaparte, who the devil is that?" they asked each other in the army of the Convention. "I had but to catch a glimpse of that little man with a monumental countenance to recognize in him one who long ago appeared to me 'as a victim' in the Allée des Feuillantes," wrote General Thiébault, not realizing perhaps the full depth of those enigmatic words "as a victim." "As before, his disorderly attire, long-hanging hair and the shabbiness of his general appearance exposed his abject poverty. . . . But his activity amazed us all; he seemed omnipresent; disappearing from one place to re-appear almost immediately in another; he amazed us still more

[8] *Mémorial*, I.

by the brevity, lucidity and rapidity of his orders, couched in the most masterful terms; finally his disposition of our forces at first amazed and then provoked our general admiration." [9]

He spent the night in restoring order, "unravelling chaos."

Against thirty thousand men of the National Guard the Convention disposed of seven or eight thousand troops of rather doubtful character. To increase their numbers, the prisons were opened and the worst terrorists set free. While the chatterboxes harangued at the Convention, the soldiers in the streets were fraternizing with the rebels. Bonaparte put an end to this: the deputies, eight hundred in all, received arms; the talkers became silent and subdued, as if suddenly conscious that their power was coming to an end.

The section troops dispatched a battalion to Sablons to bring the artillery. But Bonaparte had bethought himself of this beforehand, and had sent his aide-de-camp Muiron, who intercepted the mutineers and brought the artillery to the square Louis XVI. This settled the issue. "A minute's delay and it would have been too late." [10]

That morning the battalions of the Convention occupied the whole length of the Rue St. Honoré and the high porch and steps of the church of St. Roch. In the event of defeat, the retreat to Meudon was guaranteed by a proper disposition of troops as on an actual field of battle.

The first skirmish took place in the mews Dauphiné,

[9] Thiébault, *Mémoires*, ed. 1896, I.
[10] *Mémorial*, I.

and around the church. Bonaparte opened fire from two guns posted at the southern end of the mews. The shells flying along the Rue Neuve St. Roch, cleared it of the mutineers. A fierce bayonet fight, however, raged just around the church. Bonaparte placed a battery of six guns, three on either side of the entrance to the mews, and with volleys of grape-shot put the sectionaries to flight towards Palais-Royal, to the Place Vendôme and further on to the Place du Carrousel, where they were finally scattered by another volley. Thus did his own words uttered at this very spot on the 20th June, 1792, come to be fulfilled: "What rabble! A whiff of grape-shot would dispose of three or four hundred, and the rest would bolt!"

Two hours had been sufficient to rout thirty thousand. By six in the evening everything was finished.[11]

Bonaparte that day revealed as great a courage as at the siege of Toulon. His horse was killed under him. "Thank goodness it is all over," he wrote to his brother Joseph, on the 14th Vendemiaire. "We killed many people and disarmed the sections. . . . Now every thing is quiet. As usual, I am safe. Fortune favours me." [12]

He hastened to send 60,000 francs to Maman Letizia in Marseilles; she was at that time reduced to her last five francs assignat.

That same day he was promoted Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army. No one asked now: "Bonaparte,

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[11] Thiébault, *Mémoires*, I. Pasquier, *Mémoires*, I. Stendhal. Marmont, I. Ségur, I.

[12] Masson, *Napoléon et sa famille.*

who the devil is that?" "The little man with a monumental countenance" was now rising to his full height over Paris and over France.

"These people imagine I need their patronage," he said without a trace of pride, "but a time will come when they will be only too happy to be patronized by me. My sword is my own, and it will take me far." [13]

A sudden change was wrought in him, almost a transformation. Admiral Decrès, who considered Bonaparte as his friend, recalled his first meeting with him after Vendemiaire. "I rushed to embrace him, but paused dumbfounded by his look and the tone of his voice. There was nothing offensive in either, but at once I realized the change and never since attempted to cross the barrier he had pointed out to me." [14]

This barrier separated him only from his equals; but not from his inferiors; with the simple folk he was as simple as ever.

After Vendemiaire a famine broke out in Paris. Bread rations ceased; crowds besieged the bakeries. To keep an eye on the city, Bonaparte on horseback patrolled the streets with members of his Staff. He was surrounded and hard-pressed by a hungry mob shouting angrily for bread. The crowd grew and became menacing. One enormously fat woman brandished her fists fiercely at Bonaparte, yelling at the top of her voice: "All these gold-embroidered scoundrels only mock us; they stuff and grow fat, and don't care a scrap if the poor people starve to death!" "Here, auntie, look at me, which of

[13] Lacour-Gayet.
[14] Stendhal.

us is fatter?" retorted Bonaparte. The crowd burst out laughing and their anger subsided. So does Python expire from the mere smile of the Sun-god.

Those were the gay days of the Directory. Spring was in the air; the ice of Terror was thawing in the sunbeams of Reaction.

In those days Bonaparte became intimate with the Vicomtesse Josephine de Beauharnais, née Demoiselle Tascher, a Creole from the Martinique. Her husband, the President of the Constituent Assembly, had abandoned her in poverty with her two children; she lived from hand to mouth, making debts and speculating with moderate success; her morals, too, were none of the highest. Vicomte Beauharnais lost his life during the Terror. Citizeness Tascher was also arrested, although she posed as a "good *sans-culottes*" and was a friend of Charlotte Robespierre. By a miracle she escaped the guillotine and straight from the blood-stained dungeons of the Conciergerie found herself in the brilliant salons of the *ci-devant* aristocrats and new profiteers. It was there she met Bonaparte.

She was no longer in her first youth and concealed her age, which was thirty-two. Like that of all creoles, her complexion was dark, but skilfully "made up"; she was careful how she smiled, so as not to expose her bad teeth. She had beautiful langourous eyes and a soft voice, so melodious that servants would pause at the door to listen to it. But her greatest charm lay in her movements, undulating and graceful like the motion of waterweeds beneath a rippling wave. "Josephine was grace

personified, *la grazia in persona*," Napoleon would recall at St. Helena.[15]

In the days of her poverty she possessed sixteen dresses and only six petticoats; she changed her dresses oftener than her underlinen.

She was by nature like a "little girl of ten"; she cried and laughed as easily;[16] or like a gay bird in the forests of Martinique. Of her intellect it might perhaps be said, as Molière says of the honesty of one of his heroes: "It was just sufficient to prevent him from being hanged." She had a great deal of commonsense and subtle feminine cunning. Napoleon, the wisest of men, was not exactly deceived by her, but she knew how to defend herself against him. "No matter what I asked her, her first reply was invariably 'no'; this was not strictly speaking deceit, but mere caution and self-defence."[17]

It appears that Josephine was the first to make advances to Bonaparte. Her ambition was to marry a financier, but none being available, she contented herself with a general. A few days after their first meeting she gave him a tryst at her cosy little house in the Rue Chantereine, which she had just purchased on money received from her lover, Barras. A few days later they became betrothed.

"Do I love him?" she wrote to a friend. "No, I don't. I have merely a warm feeling for him, which does not satisfy me and which pious people hold to be the worst thing in religion."[18]

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[15] O'Meara, *Napoléon en éxil*, I.
[16] Constant, *Mémoires*, I.
[17] *Memorial*, II.
[18] Lacour-Gayet.

He is consumed with passion. Josephine is the first woman he loves or thinks he does. Love without passion is impossible, but one can experience passion without love. Of such a nature, it seems, was Bonaparte's passion for Josephine.

"The day you say: 'I love you less' will be my last. Should my heart sink so low as to love unrequited, I would tear it with my own teeth." [19] This, of course, was mere bad rhetoric—an aftermath of the "New Héloise" and the "Sufferings of Young Werther." Josephine understood this perfectly. "Is not Bonaparte funny!" she laughs, when he threatens her with "Othello's poignard." [20] But at last his state of continuous exultation wearies her, and then Monsieur Charles, an aide-de-camp of General Leclerc, dapper and curly-haired, with the face of a commercial traveller, a Don Juan of the table d'hôte, appears upon the scene. Josephine finds him more entertaining than Bonaparte. She is, however, condescending to the latter. "In spite of his little oddities, I am very fond of Bonaparte," she writes to her lover Barras.[21]

Perhaps Bonaparte too does not deceive himself. He knows perfectly well that he has taken Josephine still warm from the embraces of Barras. But he has no time to worry over this: he loves, as he eats, choking and swallowing down the lumps in hot haste. All his life long, he will never have time.

"I never really loved anyone; perhaps, Josephine a little, but that was because at the time I was seven and

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[19] Masson, *Mme. Bonaparte.*
[20] Lacour-Gayet.
[21] Masson, *Mme. Bonaparte.*

twenty." "I care neither for women nor cards; I care for nothing, I am essentially a creature of politics."

On the 19th Ventose—9th March, 1792, the marriage contract was signed at the mairie. By a tacit understanding they both may have preferred the weaker form of civil bond to the too-strong ties of a religious marriage.

"What are you doing? This general has nothing but his cloak and sword!" Josephine's solicitor, Maitre Raguideau pleaded with her a few days before the wedding.

But Josephine had no fear: Bonaparte's words were fresh in her memory: "My sword is my own; it will take me far!"

Barras was one of the witnesses. He presented Josephine with a magnificent dowry: Bonaparte's promotion to the Supreme Command of the Army of Italy. Two days after the wedding, he was on his way to rejoin it.

It was not yet sunrise, but the shades of night had paled before the dawn, and he felt as though mighty wings were bearing him away from the earth, upwards, to greet the sun.

SUNRISE

FROM VENDEMIAIRE TO BRUMAIRE

I

ITALY

1796—1797

"Those were my happiest days! What rapture, what enthusiasm! What acclamations: 'Long live the liberator of Italy!' And all this at five and twenty! Already I had the presentiment of what I might become! It was as if I were being lifted up into the air, and the world were disappearing beneath my feet!" [1]

A miracle of flight, of speed and of ease—such, too, is our impression of the Italian Campaign. But the speed alone is real—the ease is illusory: one has but to scrutinize it more closely to perceive what labour and hardships are hidden behind it.

General Lassales wrote in 1809, when Napoleon's day was already on the wane: "His greatness was supreme during the Italian campaign. Then he was the hero; now he is merely the Emperor. In Italy he had few men, and these lacked bread, arms, boots, money and administration; his appearance was insignificant; his reputation—that of a dreamer and mathematician; he could show no deeds to his account and not a single friend; he was reputed as boorish, because he held

[1] Gourgaud, II.

aloof, absorbed in his thoughts. He had all to create, and created it. It was here that he was most amazing." [2]

The difficulties which beset him at the siege of Toulon might have been as great, but there they were concentrated on a scrap of land, whereas here—they spread over a whole country and before the eyes of all Europe.

Bonaparte received from the Directory for the conquest of Italy two thousand louis d'or and even these in cheques of doubtful value. To each of his generals he assigned four louis d'or, a large sum, for it was long since anything except assignats had been seen in the army.[3] At General Massena's Headquarters there was no paper on which to write orders. According to Stendhal's "Memoirs," two lieutenants wore one pair of breeches in turns, while another subaltern had to fasten his soleless boots round his legs with string when paying a call on a Milanese marchioness.[4] The soldiers went about in rags, half-starved, drunken and turbulent, looting and marauding all they could lay their hands on. "A destitute rabble collected from Languedoc and Provence, and led by a bare-foot general," was Alfieri's verdict on this *sans-culottes* army.[5]

"When a soldier is without bread, he commits deeds which make one ashamed of being a man," wrote Bonaparte to the Directory. "I will inflict terrible exemplary punishments and restore discipline or else refuse to command this gang of robbers." [6]

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[2] Roederer.
[3] *Mémorial*, I.
[4] Stendhal.
[5] Lacour-Gayet.
[6] Lacroix.

A destitute army and a sick General: the itch contracted at Toulon had affected his internal organs, bladder trouble and a malignant fever of the Mantuan marshes are wearing him down to a shadow. People think he is poisoned. "It does one's heart good to see how sallow he looks!" the Royalists say, and drink to his speedy death.[7]

Only the eyes within that sunken face are burning with an intolerable flame, "like the dazzling brilliance of molten metal." The beast in men is subdued by a glance of those eyes.

"Damn him, this little General has inspired me with a holy terror; I cannot explain the feeling with which I was overwhelmed the first time I set eyes on him," confessed General Augereau, a *sans-culottes* cut-throat.[8]

"What mockery is this? Sending a mere lad to command us!" grumbled the old whiskered grenadiers; but they soon learnt to love him. "Even Bonaparte's sickly mien pleased them exceedingly."[9] They loved, "pitied" him for it all the more. Under the most terrific fire, he no longer needed to command; by a look or a smile he sent them marching to their death, as a woman lets her lover do mad things for love of her.

That is one of Bonaparte's miracles. In the course of a fortnight the "beggarly rabble," the "cut-throat gang" of *sans-culottes* is transformed into the Macedonian phalanxes of Alexander or the Roman legions of Caesar —armies such as were not seen for two thousand years.

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[7] Stendhal.
[8] Ségur, I.
[9] Stendhal.

The campaign opened on the 10th of April, and on the 26th he addressed a manifesto to the army: "Soldiers! in fifteen days you carried off six victories, captured twenty-one colours, fifty-five pieces of cannon, and several fortresses; you conquered the wealthiest part of Piedmont. . . . Bereft of all, you have retrieved all: you won battles without guns, crossed rivers without bridges, made forced marches without boots, camped without gin and often without bread. Only the phalanxes of the Republic, and soldiers of liberty could endure what you have endured. I thank you, soldiers! . . . Yet all this is as nothing compared to what you are called upon to achieve!" [10]

When from the summit of Monte-Semmolo he points out to them the Promised Land—the rolling, flowering plains of Lombardy stretching far beneath in all the glory of a spring morning, they all shout and clap their hands in glee: "Italy! Italy!"

It is as if the whole army were flying after its leader on outspread wings: "As if the world were disappearing beneath their feet!"

April—Floreal, the month of flowers, the freshness of morning, the joy of spring. "Nothing can be compared to their bravery, except their gaiety," wrote Bonaparte in his report to the Directory.[11] "The army's poverty was only equalled by its boundless courage and mirth. The men laughed and sang all day," wrote Stendhal who took part in the campaign.[12] To-morrow —perhaps they die, but to-day they laugh and sing, as

[10] Lacroix.
[11] Ségur, I.
[12] Stendhal

long ago beneath the same deep blue Italian sky laughed and sang the holy "*sans-culottes*," Francis of Assisi.

All this merry war is like a thunderstorm in early May.

> As though the lightsome Hebe in her mirth,
> When feeding Zeus' eagle, spill
> The foaming sparkling wine of Phœbus
> From heaven upon earth. . . .

A tankard of that most intoxicating of all wines—liberty. "Peoples of Italy! The French army is advancing to smash your chains; the French people are the friends of all the nations. Come out to greet them. . . . Believe us, we desire ill only to your tyrants." [13] "We, the descendants of the Brutuses, the Scipios, and all the great men of ancient times, are your friends. To restore the Capitol, to re-erect within it the statues of the heroes . . . to awaken the Roman people lulled by centuries of slavedom—such will be the fruits of our victories." [14]

The first classical Renaissance was accomplished here in Italy—in contemplation and art; this, the second, is being consummated in living men and action. All these young heroes—the Lannes, Muirons, Desaix and hosts of others unknown—pure, virile, clear-eyed, straight as a dart—are like heroes of ancient times come once more into the world. And Bonaparte is the most valiant of them all. "No one thinks of great things in our days; I will give them an example." [15] "In those

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[13] Lacroix.
[14] Lacour-Gayet.
[15] *Ibid.*

days I despised all that was not glory." [16] Yet it seems at times as if he were contemptuous even of fame, barely condescending to pick up its laurels, barely stooping from some pinnacle more lofty than fame itself, the nature of which as yet remains unknown even to himself.

Magnanimously he exonerates his defeated enemy, the valiant seventy-year-old Austrian Field Marshal Wurmser. He writes offering peace to the Archduke Charles: "Have not we exterminated enough men and caused enough distress? As far as I am concerned, I value one man's life higher than all my victories." [17] "A man like myself does not care a snap for the lives of a million men," he said later.[18] "An actor, *commediante*," thus will the Pope brand him. But people, as a rule, are not fools: they will not be duped by "acting" alone, particularly in war, where human souls are bared like swords and where courage is in demand; and "courage cannot be faked: this virtue shuns hypocrisy," according to Napoleon's beautiful saying.[19]

Indeed, one has but to look into his face to realize that he possesses some truth of his own. Why this almost unearthly melancholy of expression? Or was General Thiébault prophetically right when he said: "When first I saw him advancing like a *victim* in the Allée des Feuillants." And lit up by the first rays of the rising sun of glory, does he already know—*remember* the starry night of "St. Helena,—small island"?

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[16] Antommarchi, I.
[17] Lacour-Gayet.
[18] Metternich, I. Taine, *Les origines de la France contemporaine*, IX.
[19] J. Bertaut, *Virilités*.

All descriptions of battles, even Napoleon's, are dull stuff for the average reader. Battle is a lightning flash: how depict or fix lightning? To realize the full force of the storm, one can merely mark the geometrical points of its progress.

Montenotte—12th April; Millesimo—14th; Dego—15th; Mondovi—22nd; Cherasco—25th; Lodi—10th May; victory follows victory—lightning flash after lightning flash. Piedmont is over-run, the gates of Italy stormed in a single fortnight. And onwards, again with the same lightning-like rapidity: Lodi, Lonato, Castiglione, Roveredo, Bassano, Arcola, Rivoli, Favorita, Tagliamento. In nineteen months Italy and the Tyrol are conquered, and Bonaparte is at the gates of Vienna.

Three gems sparkle in that crown of victories: Lodi, Arcola, Rivoli.

Lodi appears as child's play, as if Bonaparte guessed that the soldiers were longing for a game, or perhaps he himself wanted to test Destiny—"to stake all for all." All games are useless, but so also are fame and beauty—all the games of the gods are useless, and the more so, the more they are divine.

Bonaparte was marching on Milan. To reach it there was no need to cross the Adige by the Lodi bridge, and in any case this could not be treated as a joke: the bridge was guarded by ten thousand Austrians with thirty pieces of cannon. But Bonaparte knew what he was doing. He divided his grenadiers into two columns; one was posted in an ambuscade, the other advanced on to the bridge. Having reached halfway under terrific grape-shot fire, the head of the column halted as if about to turn back. Bonaparte's heart too, stood still, as a gam-

bler's who had placed too high a stake. This, however, was but a momentary pause between two heart-beats; it throbbed again, this time with joy. The head of the column, though terribly thinned, did not turn back. The men crawled down the buttresses into the river, discovered a ford, scrambled up the opposite bank and dispersed across the field as snipers pretending to be making for the rear of the Austrian lines and diverting the battery fire on themselves. Simultaneously the second column, quitting its ambuscade, rushed on to the bridge and before the Austrians could realize what had happened, the French had carried the battery by a bayonet charge and the bridge was crossed.

A child could understand the absolute simplicity of it all; the men, too, understood. A multitude of popular illustrations of the "Crossing of the Lodi Bridge" appeared not only in France but also in Germany and England. Before people had learnt correctly even to pronounce Bonaparte's name, it was caught up by fame, sounded by a thousand clarions and carried throughout the world. He went to bed a French and awoke a European hero. Later he said: "Neither Vendemiaire nor Montenotte made me think I was a superior being; that came after Lodi; the first spark of a sublime ambition was kindled then." [20]

The deed was simple, but only Bonaparte was capable of such simplicity. For Lodi to become a success, it was necessary for him to know exactly what the head of the first column would do on the bridge, with the same exactitude as a man knows what he is about to do

[20] *Mémorial*, I.

himself; it was necessary for the leader to be as in touch with the body and soul of the army as he is with his own. The secret of this was lost from the days of Alexander and Caesar until those of Bonaparte.

"The Little Corporal" the soldiers called him after Lodi, and worshipped him ever after; they realized that, to simple folk he was their kin, "a brother," "the man," "*l'Homme.*"

More perfectly than in any military reports, Lodi is explained by a contemporary lithograph illustration. Bonaparte is warming himself at a bivouac fire with his back to it, standing legs apart and hands behind his back, in the same posture as later the Emperor will adopt when warming himself in front of the fire in the Palace of the Tuileries. The grenadiers are clustered around him: some are mounting guard; others are fast asleep huddled at his feet, or smoking pipes and drinking *eau de vie* with revolutionary equality; but the eyes of all, except of those asleep, are fixed as if in prayer upon their Man-god.

Arcola is play no longer. Here Bonaparte with his whole army escaped destruction by a hairbreadth. To save himself he decides upon a desperate plan: to march to the rear of the Austrian Field-Marshal Alvinzi across the almost impassable marshes of the Adige. For this it is necessary to capture the bridge at Arcola, which is defended by two pieces of cannon so well that a mouse could not cross it under point-blank grape-shot fire, let alone man. After several fruitless attacks in which they are mowed down like grass, the men refused to face certain death. Bonaparte seizes the colour and darts forward, alone at first, then followed by all.

General Lannes, twice wounded the day before, protects him with his body, and wounded a third time, falls senseless at his feet; Colonel Muiron protects him and is killed on his breast, his blood spurting in Bonaparte's face. Another instant, and Bonaparte would have been killed too; but he falls from the bridge into the marsh, whence he is miraculously saved by the grenadiers.

The bridge was not taken. Therefore, Bonaparte's deed was useless? No, all this was necessary in the highest degree. He raised the spirit of the soldiers to an unprecedented height, he had ignited their hearts with his own fire as one candle is lighted from another. "I believe I am the bravest man in war that ever lived," he once said quite simply, in the course of a conversation.[21] After Arcola it could also be said of the French army that it was "the bravest that ever existed." The Austrian Field-Marshal Alvinzi felt this to be so: he abandoned the impregnable position of Caldiero, surrendered Mantua and the whole of Italy. The first half of the campaign was over.[22]

Rivoli is the last great and the most arduous battle of the Italian Campaign. Bonaparte solved it in his mind as he would a problem of mathematics, where valour played no part. The problem might thus be tackled but not solved, because it was an equation with a large number of unknown factors—five at the very least, because

[21] *Mémorial,* IV.

[22] D. Merezhkovsky, *Napoleon the Man.* ch. VII. "The Leader." Certain repetitions as here and elsewhere are inevitable, the same events being treated under a different aspect.

five Austrian columns in succession emerged on to the plateau from the Alpine passes in a way which rendered it impossible to foresee whence and when each would appear or whither it would go. The Austrian troops were fresh and fought as they had never fought before, while the French were exhausted by continuous fighting and forced marches.

The battle began at four o'clock in the morning and by eleven the plight of the French was almost desperate. Their left wing had been outflanked and nearly destroyed; the centre, where Bonaparte had his stand, still held out but a break-through appeared imminent. At this moment the fifth and strongest of the Austrian columns suddenly sprung up as if from nowhere, scaled the precipitous cliff of the narrow gorge of Incanale, and hurled itself on Bonaparte's right flank sweeping everything before it in its charge.

Bonaparte then realized that he was surrounded, and annihilation was almost certain. Forty-five thousand Austrians had closed like a vice round the seventeen thousand French. Had but a muscle quivered in his face at that moment—the shock would have been transmitted to the whole army and set it in flight; but his face was calm as that of a man solving a problem of mathematics. Knowing it to be insoluble, he nevertheless attempted it; believed in non-sense as if it were sense; looked for a miracle in a sphere impervious to miracles—mathematics. And gazing into his face the soldiers too believed in the miracle—and behold, it came to pass: the fifth Austrian column was repulsed and precipitated back into the gorge of Incanale. By night all was over and

the enemy defeated. But Bonaparte would never be able to tell or so much as recall the cost of that effort or how he himself escaped insanity on that awful day.

Suddenly, just as the battle was waning, fresh news, still more harrowing, was brought him: the Austrian General Provera was marching on Mantua. Mantua, the key to the whole of Italy, would once more be recaptured from the French, together with Arcola, which last would cause Muiron's sacred blood to have been shed in vain, while the miracle of Rivoli would no longer be a miracle but a nonsense: mathematics would be avenged!

What of Bonaparte? Still immovable, not a muscle of his face quivering? No, there was a change: like a man possessed, he shouted: "To Mantua, soldiers, to Mantua!" Or perhaps he merely pretended to be in a frenzy, while in his mind, still deadly calm, he was solving this new and monstrous equation no longer with five but with an unknown quantity of factors.

"To Mantua!" he commands that same 32nd half brigade which had arrived only that very night by forced marches from Verona, and hurled itself into the fray without taking time to recover breath, fighting in such a way that all day the fate of the battle had hung on it as by a thread; to that very half brigade from the ranks of which a grenadier had shouted to him: "Art after fame, General? We'll give it you, damn you! *Nous t'en f . . . de la gloire.*" [23]

"To Mantua! To Mantua!" re-echoed the 32nd as if possessed by delirium.

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[23] Ségur, I.

Thirty miles lies between Rivoli and Mantua. To arrive in time it would be necessary to march, at a run, all night and all the next day, and once more, without pausing to take breath, to rush into battle, fight six thousand against sixteen thousand, and conquer. They came, they fought and conquered, at Favorita.

Bonaparte wrote to the Directory: "The Roman legions were reputed to march twenty-four miles a day; our half brigades cover thirty and fight in the intervals." [24]

What does Favorita signify? It means: twenty-two thousand prisoners with all the artillery and baggage; Mantua abandoned by the Austrians, then the whole of the Tyrol and of Italy. Field Marshal Wurmser, the seventy-year-old Commander, the soul of the Austrian Empire and himself valour personified, is at Bonaparte's feet. The Italian Campaign is over, and Favorita—the star of Napoleon's fortune—sparkles like an eternal gem upon his firmament.

What is Favorita to us? And yet, one cannot recall it without tears of ecstasy—for what? Let silence be the answer; nevertheless it is good for us all that it *was*.

The Italian Campaign is at an end, but this end is only a beginning. "Soldiers! All this is as nothing compared to what you are called upon to achieve!" Many more forced marches, foes unconquered, laurels ungathered, insults unavenged . . . "Soldiers, forward march!" [25]

When and where will he pause? Never and nowhere! He will lead them to the ends of the earth and beyond,

[24] Ségur, I.
[25] Lacour-Gayet.

into infinity. They all will rise after him, like Ossian shadows, like phantom-clouds chased by the winds across the moon. The bones of all will be scattered—some in the burning sands around the Pyramids, others in the snowdrifts of the Berezina; all will be *victims*, like himself. "Poor man! I pity him: he will be an object of envy to his fellow-men, and the most miserable of them all. . . . Men of genius are like meteors which must be consumed to lighten the darkness of their age."

"Napoleon's heroic days were over"; thus Stendhal ends his narrative of the Italian Campaign.[26] No, they were not over, the heroic in Napoleon's life will only end with life itself, but its aspect will be different. There will be no more of this perpetual miracle of upward flight, of morning freshness and youth, of the thunderously foaming goblet of spring storms, and Ossian-like, almost unearthly melancholy, of sacrificial purity. . . . Here will be none of these; he will soar to greater heights, his noontide glory will be more radiant, the roll of his thunder more terrific, more regal, the purple hue of sunset, more holy, the starry mysteries of night, more sacrificial, the sacrifice—but *this* will never be repeated.

The Peace of Campo-Formio was signed on the 17th October, 1797, and on the 5th December Bonaparte returned to Paris. The Directory welcomed him with a great show of outward enthusiasm and much secret jealousy: the insignificant were overshadowed by his

[26] Stendhal.

greatness. "They'll poison him!" people said in Paris, recalling General Hoche's sudden death.[27]

When dining at the Luxembourg with the Directors, Bonaparte waits for his hosts to eat and drink before himself touching either food or wine. They watch him with a mocking smile: fearless on the field of battle, is he afraid of poison? And already that mocking smile flits over Paris, tarnishing the hero's glory.

"Do you imagine that my victories here are for the glorification of the lawyers of the Directory, or for the foundation of a Republic?" he wrote when still in Italy. "No, France needs no ideologue-chatterers, but a Leader. . . . But the hour is not yet come, nor the pear ripe." [28]

Meanwhile Paris stifles him. "Paris weighs me down like a leaden pall!" "Free soaring into space, that is what is necessary for such wings as his. Here he will die; he must get away." [29] Whither—he knows—remembers.

The duel between France and England, between the new order and the old for world power, commenced almost from the first days of the Revolution. "The spirit of liberty, which placed the Republic from its very birth at the head of the European nations, demands that France should become the queen of the seas and of all distant lands," Bonaparte said in his manifesto to the army of the East.[30]

The plan for a landing in England was, it seems, already debated in the Committee of Public Safety; and

[27] Stendhal.
[28] Lacour-Gayet.
[29] Abrantès.
[30] Lacour-Gayet.

was from there inherited by the Directory. "Let us concentrate all our energies on the fleet, shatter England, and all Europe will be at our feet," wrote Bonaparte on the day of signing the Treaty of Campo-Formio.[31] But when appointed Commander-in-Chief of the expeditionary force, he had already other schemes in his mind.

"I will merely look in, in the North, and if, as I expect, there is nothing to be done there at present, our army of England will become the army of the East." "Your Europe is a mole-hill! Great empires are founded and great revolutions accomplished only in the East, with its population of six hundred millions!" [32]

Through Egypt to India, there to strike the death-blow to English world dominion—such was Bonaparte's gigantic scheme, the "insane chimera, the product of a diseased brain." The more insane, the better, said the Directory. "Let him go to the East, to break his neck!"

On the 19th May, 1798, Bonaparte sailed to Malta from Toulon on board the hundred and twenty gun frigate, the *Orient*, at the head of a flotilla of forty-eight war ships and two hundred and eighty transports, with thirty-eight thousand troops, bound for Egypt.

He knew—*remembered*, that he, like the sun, must rise in the East.

[31] *Ibid.*
[32] Bourrienne, I.

II

EGYPT

1798—1799

"All the chances were against and none for us. We marched heedlessly to almost certain destruction. The whole enterprise, it must be owned, was a mad venture which success itself could not justify," thus wrote General Marmont in his reminiscences of the Egyptian Campaign." [1]

The English under Admiral Nelson were cruising off Toulon, on the look-out for the French. A fleet is not a pin. Supposing that by some miracle it should succeed in slipping out of the harbour unobserved, would Nelson fail to track this floating town stretched over seven kilometres of waterway in the course of its six weeks' voyage from Toulon to Alexandria? And once tracked, destruction was imminent.

And yet thousands of men, trusting in Bonaparte's lucky star, had staked their destiny, life and honour, in a word their all, on this "mad venture." Nor were these people mere idealists, men of abstract mentality, like the members of the Institute—the chemist Berthollet, the physicist Monge, and the archeologist

[1] Marmont, I.

Denou, who might have had some knowledge of the theory of probabilities propounded by their colleague, Laplas; they numbered also men of sound common-sense and experience not at all addicted to "mad and irrational behaviour."

"Do you see that man?" the banker Collot asked General Junot pointing to Bonaparte. "If it were of any advantage to him he would not hesitate to throw us all overboard; in fact we ourselves might be capable of jumping in to please him!" [2]

They no sooner left the bay, than the "mad venture" commenced: stake on stake, success on success, in geometrical progression of the miraculous. Were not this history, it could hardly be believed, it savoured so much of the fairy tale.

Exactly at the opportune date, hour and moment, the English fleet is forced to put far out to sea by a northeast *mistral*—a veritable gale which scatters and damages their ships and compels them to return to harbour for repairs which last for over a week, and when the fleet re-appears off Toulon, twelve days have already elapsed since Bonaparte's departure. Correctly judging the latter's course to have been laid on Malta, Admiral Nelson pursues and overtakes him, but passes by without discovering him. Had the Nereides, Napoleon's stellar accomplices, sent sea mists to blur the glass of the Englishmen's telescopes and obstruct their vision?

In nine days Malta surrenders to the French almost without resistance. Meanwhile Nelson, again having

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[2] Vandal, *Avénement de Bonaparte*, I.

correctly premised Bonaparte's itinerary, sails for Alexandria; but failing to find him there, prolongs his course to Syria. Had he but stayed one extra day in Alexandria he would most certainly have captured the whole French fleet: from the main-mast of Bonaparte's scouting ship, the English fleet could be sighted leaving the harbour. For a whole month Nelson chases the elusive phantom-fleet across the Mediterranean; and within that month the French occupation of Egypt became an accomplished fact.

On the 2nd July at an hour after midnight, Bonaparte was the first to set foot on Egyptian soil.

That same day, Alexandria, the erstwhile capital of the East, now a miserable little town of six thousand inhabitants, was easily occupied by the French. Five days later the French army began its march on Cairo, not skirting the Nile where it could be intercepted by an enemy flotilla, but straight across the desert of Damanhur. To realize the sufferings of the army during that six days' march, one must have some idea of conditions in an Egyptian desert in July. To the men it seemed as if they had entered the furnace of Gehenna; they went off their heads or dropped dead not so much from heat, hunger or thirst, as from sheer terror. Discontent and desertions set in, almost mutiny. Yet it sufficed for Bonaparte but to appear among the mutineers, and at once they quieted down and once more the men followed him submissively like shades following Hermes, the Leader of Souls, into flaming Hades.

On the 12th July they sighted the Nile, then in flood, and wide as the sea; rushing towards it, they plunged

into its waters and forgot all their sufferings, as shades forget them in the waters of Lethe. They continued their march along the Nile for nine days longer, and suddenly on the 21st July at dawn, like a mirage or a fairy vision from the Arabian nights, Cairo arose before them with its four hundred minarets and the huge mosque of Djemil-Azra, the beloved city of the Prophet, the successor of Memphis and Heliopolis. And beyond, out of the yellow sands of the desert of Giseth, silhouetted against the grey-blue back-ground of the hills of Mocattam, pale and langourous, dimly discernible in the rosy, sunlit haze, rose gigantic phantom forms. "What is this?" the soldiers asked in wonder; and when told that these were Pyramids, the sepulchres of ancient kings—they refused to believe these mountains to be the work of human hands.

In the camp of Embabeh beneath the walls of Cairo the Mameluke cavalry, famed throughout the East, lay in wait for them, ten thousand strong. Men and horses, richly adorned and caparisoned in glittering steel, gold and precious stones—appeared as a dazzling vision from the Arabian Nights. At their head, upon a prancing white charger rode the aged ruler of Egypt, Pasha Murad-Bey, his head swathed in a green turban with a diamond aigrette.

"We shall chop their heads off like water-melons!" he exclaimed when he heard that the French had no cavalry.[3]

The Mamelukes, these bold sons of the desert, acknowledged no discipline and had no use for artillery.

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[3] Marmont, I.

Each put his trust in himself alone, in his Damascus blade, his Arab steed and in the Prophet.

"Soldiers, forty centuries look down on you from these Pyramids!" exclaimed Bonaparte, and stationed his divisions in five squares with four guns at the angle of each, the whole formation presenting five living fortresses bristling with steel bayonets.

At the first charge the Mameluke cavalry very nearly overthrew the extreme right flank square, but General Desaix who commanded it, immediately rallied his troops and the formation was restored. And slowly with methodical ruthlessness the steel wedges of the squares began to penetrate the living body of the cavalry. The horsemen whirled round them, dashing themselves against their steel flanks like surf against a rock, only to be hurled back each time, snarling like dogs who encounter the bristling needles of a porcupine.

Soon the battle became a slaughter. Realizing their doom, the Mamelukes became as if possessed by the very devil. After firing their last shot or dealing a final stab with their yataghans, they threw their arms in the face of their victors, and hurled themselves on to their bayonets, wrestled with them, tore at them with their teeth, and when trampled under the soldiers' feet, still almost with their last breath tried to bite their legs. Thus did the savage freedom of Asia expire at the feet of civilized Europe.

The whole camp of Embabeh fell a prey to the French. The soldiers at once set up a market where priceless armour looted from the still warm bodies of the enemy, horses, saddles, cloths, shawls, carpets, furs, silver, china, Oriental wines and spices, were bought and

sold by auction; men ate and drank, danced and sang revolutionary ditties in a delirium of joy. Others sat on the banks of the Nile "fishing" with hooks made out of bayonets attached to long cords, for gold fish—the bodies of drowned Mamelukes glittering with gold and precious stones.

And "forty centuries looked down upon it all from the Pyramids."

The French army entered Cairo on the 24th July. Here, for the space of thirteen days, Bonaparte could think half his task accomplished and the way to India open. But on the 7th August came the awful news: Nelson at last had overtaken his quarry—the French fleet—in the Bay of Abukir near Alexandria, had swooped down upon it like a hawk and destroyed it. The French Admiral Bruyès had been killed in battle.

The fate of the Egyptian Campaign was sealed: cut off from France, Bonaparte found himself caught by his own victory like a mouse in a trap.

"We no longer possess a fleet; it remains for us either to perish or to emerge from here as great as the heroes of antiquity!" Thus he spoke to the men in public; when alone he would repeat clutching his head:

"Ah, Bruyès, Bruyès, what have you done!" [4]

He knew—*remembered* the meaning of Abukir: the ocean had overcome the dry land—the way to India was closed. It was still open—whither? That, as yet, he knew not, had already *forgotten*. But a dumb Destiny remembered—that empty page of his schoolboy diary

[4] Ségur, I.

with the four words: "St. Helena—small island." Abukir was the father of Trafalgar, the grandsire of Waterloo.

Here Bonaparte for the first time perhaps, realized that "there is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous." The gigantic chimera had exploded like a bubble; the mountain turned out to be a mole-hill.

Unrest once more became widespread in the army. "The soldiers murmured and so did the generals," Napoleon recalled later at St. Helena: "It seems a terrible thing to say, but I am inclined to believe the loss of the fleet at Abukir to have been providential; otherwise the whole army would have boarded the ships and fled." [5]

A plot to seize Bonaparte, bring him to Alexandria and force him to negotiate with England and obtain a safe conduct to France for the army at the price of Egypt's surrender, was set afoot at headquarters. It only failed owing to timely detection.

No sooner had one chimera exploded, than another still more gigantic loomed forth. The army, thirty thousand strong and cut off from its base, was to advance, following the trail of Alexander the Great through Syria and Mesopotamia to India, there to stir up the Asiatic peoples and at the head of their countless hordes to strike Europe in the back and in Constantinople found a World Empire of the East and West.

Bonaparte would spend whole days sprawling on the ground poring over maps and absorbed in calculations of the distance to India. Did his memory conjure up the

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[5] Gourgaud.

image of a lieutenant of artillery sitting in a poor little barrack-room at Auxonne, dreaming by the light of a greasy candle of "the pharaoh Sesostris who in 1491 B.C. conquered Asia and reached India both by sea and over land"?

"Only in Egypt did I feel myself free from the trammels of civilization," Napoleon was wont to say at the summit of his fame as an Emperor. "I saw myself on the road to Asia, riding on an elephant, with a turban on my head and carrying a new Alkoran of my own invention. These were the best days of my life, because the most idealistic." [6]

After all, were his dreams as insane as they appeared to be? General Marmont, well acquainted with the conditions then existing in the Orient and certainly no admirer of Bonaparte's, affirmed that the lack of military technique in Asia would ensure even to a small but well-equipped European army an incalculable superiority over the Asiatic hordes; such an army would cut into the body of the old continent like a knife into soft wax. "I dreamed, and knew I possessed the means to realize my dreams," asserted Bonaparte himself.[7] He dreamed of enrolling multitudes of Fellahs and black African native conscripts into his army. Already he was dispatching a mission to Mecca and a letter to one of the sultans on the Indian border.

The spiritual obstacles to such a scheme, however, exceeded even the material difficulties. To shake oneself actually free of European Christian civilization, Christianity itself would have to be repudiated. Was he pre-

[6] Rémusat, I.
[7] Marmont, II.

pared for this also, or was it merely pretence? In any case he was so incautious as to repeat the light joke of a bantering king: "Paris is worth a mass!" [8] This meant: world dominion is worth Christianity.

"In the evenings I discussed theology with the beys; I told them that the God of Mahomet alone existed and that it was absurd to believe that three could be One. I always had seven coffee pots on the boil, and no Turk who visited me was ever allowed to go without tasting some." [9]

In calling him "the Fiery Sultan," the sons of the Prophet perhaps showed their understanding of him; but it is doubtful whether they believed him to be "God's messenger" or "the second incarnation of the Prophet," even after having read his manifesto to the Moslem sheikhs and uhlems: "It was written in heaven from the beginning of the world that after destroying the enemies of Islam and hurling down the crosses, I should come from the West to fulfill my destiny." "Thus did I make fun of them," he added later.[10] "Of course this was quackery, but of a superior order." [11] He was persuaded that "the whole army would follow my example and treat such a change of religion as a huge joke." But even if the army of atheist *sans-culottes* had proved itself capable of such a "joke," it is doubtful whether Bonaparte himself would have benefited by it, for when General Menou, a follower of Voltaire, embraced Islam, he became everybody's laughing stock.

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[8] Gourgaud, II.
[9] Roederer.
[10] Antommarchi, I.
[11] Laçour-Gayet.

On the 10th February, 1799, Bonaparte set out on the Syrian campaign. Notwithstanding his gigantic chimeras, he well knew that the army merely followed him in the hope of escaping from Egypt.

The terrible Syrian desert in which the children of Israel had wandered forty years was crossed by the French in a fortnight. On the 25th February they reached Gaza, the first town in Palestine; on the 6th March they captured Jaffa, where they were obliged to shoot down two thousand Arnaut prisoners. "Never did war appear so abhorrent to me!" wrote Bonaparte to the Directory.[12] After skirting the foot of Mount Carmel, they approached Saint Jean d'Acre, ancient Ptolemais, on the 17th March. In the course of a little over one month, between Cairo to Acre they covered nearly seven hundred kilometres, with battles and sieges interspersed.

The paltry little fortress of Acre, "*une bicoque*," would, Bonaparte thought, prove an easy prey. But fate ruled otherwise. The trench siege dragged on for months; half the army perished, but Acre held out. When Commodore Sidney Smith seized the French artillery transport at sea, and re-inforced the garrison by twenty thousand men and his own guns, Bonaparte realized that Acre marked the end of the Syrian campaign just as Abukir had marked that of the Egyptian. Once again the ocean had vanquished the dry land.

"My destiny tripped over a grain of sand," Napoleon said at St. Helena. "Were Acre taken, the French army would have precipitated itself on Damascus and Aleppo, and reached the Euphrates in an incredibly short time.

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[12] Ségur, I.

We should have been re-inforced by six hundred thousand Christian Druses, and who knows what would have happened? I should have reached Constantinople, India. . . . I should have changed the face of the world!" [13]

The worst of it was, he seemed suddenly to have gone blind—to forget whither Destiny was calling him. To stay near Acre became impossible. On the 20th May Bonaparte raised the siege and started on the return march to Egypt—across the same seven hundred kilometres, this time with a defeated army. The men had marched forward with hope, now they were going back with despair in their hearts. They were as one who is buried alive, who endeavours to rise out of the grave, but powerless to do so, falls back again and again.

That year the summer was exceptionally hot, 110 degrees in the shade. The men's feet sank into the hot, shifting sand, while the scorching rays of the sun dropped like molten lead upon their heads. As in last year's march across the Damanhur desert, the men, collapsing from heat, thirst, hunger and fatigue, went mad and committed suicide.

Bonaparte walked on foot in the convoy of the sick and wounded; he gave up all the horses for their use. In that convoy were some plague-stricken cases. He visited them twice in the hospital at Jaffa; had stood for a long time talking to them, cheered them, and is said to have helped carry one from one cot to another to prove to the soldiers and doctors that plague was not so dangerous as reputed.

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[13] *Mémorial*, II. Lacroix. Bourrienne, I.

He walked in the baggage transport, repulsing the attacks of Beduin robber bands, who swarmed round the retreating army like hornets and gadflies round a bruised and bleeding beast of burden. He shared every man's sufferings, cheered and sustained them all. He alone rescued the whole army out of that hell, as a mother rescues her child out of a burning house.

No, Napoleon's "heroic days" were not over: Lodi, Arcola, Rivoli, the whole Italian campaign were but child's play when compared to that awful march across the desert. The sacrificial image of him stands out here more vividly than ever before. The fiery desert of Syria is the mother of the icy wilderness of the Berezina. He is perhaps a greater hero in his defeats than in his triumphs.

On the 15th June the French army reached Cairo. The Egyptian and Syrian campaigns were both lost. This fact could not be remedied by the brilliant action at Abukir on the 25th June, when the Turkish landing force seventeen thousand strong was hurled back into the sea.

No news had been received from France for six months, except some vague rumours of an unsuccessful war. From a chance newspaper which fell into his hands, Bonaparte learnt that France was on the verge of destruction: revolt at home, war abroad. The Rhine army was annihilated, that of Italy also; Italy, *his* Italy, lost.

Instantly a light seemed to burst upon Bonaparte, and his eyes were opened; he suddenly understood—*remembered*, whither Destiny was calling him.

On the 19th August he left Cairo secretly and arrived

at Alexandria. Here he ordered Rear-Admiral Ganteaume to make ready, also secretly, two frigates, the *Muiron* and *Carrere*, which had escaped destruction in the battle of Abukir.

On the 23rd August he issued a proclamation: "Soldiers! News from France compels me to quit Egypt. I hand over the command to General Kleber. The army will soon have news of me; I can say no more. It pains me to abandon the men to whom I am so deeply attached, but my absence will not be for long."

What name can be given to a general who abandons his troops and flees from the field of battle? That of deserter. But the choice had to be made: either to betray the army, or France. He followed the call of Destiny.

In the night of the 24th August Bonaparte boarded the frigate *Muiron* and next morning the shores of Egypt were lost to view.

Once again the "mad venture" re-commenced; stake after stake; success after success, in the geometrical progression of the miraculous.

Like Nelson before him, Sidney Smith pursues the phantom ship, and again the Nereides send sea mists to blur the glass of his telescope.

From the outset, Bonaparte's ships were carried by a south-easterly breeze about four hundred kilometres west of Alexandria to the deserted coast of Great Cyrenaica; then, the wind veering to a steady north-west, they drifted slowly along the absolutely deserted African coast, where the English would never dream of searching for Bonaparte.

This hopelessly slow drifting against wind and tide lasted twenty days. Each morning, as they consulted the

chart, the navigators found that they either stood still or had drifted back from their course. At last on the 19th September they reached the Gulf of Sirta, where there was dead calm. A fresh south-south-west breeze then sprung up which set the vessels running through the straits between Cape Bon and Sicily. Here an English cruiser lay in wait for them. But the French entered the straits at the best possible moment—at dusk; had they done so a shade earlier—the enemy would have sighted them; a shade later—they themselves would have been unable to pass the dangerous coast in the darkness. At night they saw the lights of the English cruiser and by dawn had lost sight of her.

The same favourable south-west breeze bore them towards Corsica; one extra breath—and they would have found themselves in the midst of the English fleet, when suddenly, after veering to the north-east, seemingly an adverse quarter, the wind dropped completely as if it had accomplished its task—to bring Bonaparte to his cradle, Ajaccio.

A favourable wind having once more sprung up on the 7th October, the *Muiron* headed her course straight for Toulon. Only forty kilometres of water separated them from land; when off the islands of Hyères, twenty-two sail, the whole English fleet, appeared on the horizon. The lookout sighted the French cruisers, and the pursuit began.

"The sun was setting, and the enemy was facing it," wrote General Marmont who was on board the *Muiron*. "We could see the enemy plainly, while we ourselves were almost invisible owing to the evening mist; they could not discern how our sails were set. This alone

saved us. Our fate hung in the balance. Ganteaume proposed to Bonaparte to return to Corsica. After a moment's hesitation the latter decided to trust to destiny, and merely to alter our course, heading for St. Raphael-Frejus. The English, thinking our two frigates had sailed from Toulon, pursued us in the open sea, whereas we steered our course straight towards land." [14]

Next morning, the 9th October, Bonaparte landed in Frejus and that same evening proceeded towards Paris.

"I will not attempt to describe the enthusiasm which took possession of the whole of France," writes Marmont: "The ray which flared up at Frejus set the whole country ablaze." [15] That ray heralded Bonaparte's rising sun.

[14] Marmont, II.
[15] *Ibid.*

III

THE 18TH BRUMAIRE

1799

"None but a lunatic or a malefactor would want to slay the Revolution," Bonaparte said after the 18th Brumaire [1] and repeated at St. Helena: "People are still engaged in abstract deliberation as to whether our action of the 18th Brumaire was a legal or a criminal one. At the best, however, these are but theories suitable for books or public orators and which disappear before the face of sheer necessity: it is like condemning a mariner for chopping off a mast to escape shipwreck. The perpetrators of this great *coup d'état* could reply to their accusers as did the Roman of old: "Our act is justified in that we saved the Republic; let us therefore render thanks to the gods!" [2]

Thus, to the end of his life Bonaparte believed or wished to believe, that in slaying the worst half of the Revolution, the Terror, he had saved its better half; while the Jacobins affirmed that he slew it wholesale. Which of them deceives the other, or is himself deceived?

"Bonaparte's return was like the rising of the sun;

[1] Vandal, *L'avénement de Bonaparte*, II.
[2] *Mémorial*, III.

all eyes were turned to him," writes General Marmont.[3] All eyes were turned to him, because in him everyone saw the rising sun of peace after the seven years' long night of war.

"*Vive Bonaparte!* Peace, peace!" shouted the crowds which ran after him across France, from Frejus to Paris.[4]

"We have brought peace; this must be repeated in all the theatres and newspapers, in prose, and verse, and song," he says on the evening of the 18th Brumaire, at least in half sincerity. This great conqueror knows, none better, the awful meaning of war: he still remembers, and all his life long will remember, his experiences in Jaffa: "Never had war seemed so abhorrent to me!" Yes, however strange it may seem, the will for peace in him is as strong as the will for war. The aim of all his wars is world dominion, a fraternal unity of nations—universal peace.

He deceives no one, yet in him all are deceived. Bonaparte is not the god of war, but of peace—that is one of those stupendous *qui pro quo*, in which mocking Destiny abounds.

He deceives no one, or if he does, it is done unintentionally. Perhaps for a politician he is too truthful. "Enough of parties! I will have none of them; I belong to none. My great party is the French nation," he says on the eve of the 18th Brumaire in the thick of party turmoil, on the crest of that wave which was to bear him to power.[5] The end of "parties" means the end of civil strife—internal peace.

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[3] Marmont, II.
[4] Vandal, I.
[5] Vandal, I.

Baudin of Ardennes, formerly a member of the Convention and now a Deputy of the Council of the Ancients, a fiery patriot and Republican, is reputed to have died of joy at the news of Bonaparte's return; for the sun of peace has risen, and the Republic—Revolution saved. The poor man, it might be said, died of misunderstanding; yet by the same misunderstanding how many others live.

Bonaparte "allows himself to be carried to power by this breeze of false sentiment." [6] He sets his sails to it, as those of the *Muiron* to the favouring wind; suffers himself to be enveloped in the mantle of self-deception in which all France is enshrouded, as the sea mists enveloped his ship when fleeing from Commander Sidney Smith's pursuit.

Some people, however, felt a vague premonition of the truth. "The god whom I invoke as the protector of my fatherland is a despot, provided he be a genius," wrote the pamphleteer Soulot in prophetic vein in 1792, when Bonaparte was still unknown.[7] Equally prophetic were the words of Napoleon's brother, the eighteen-year-old Lucien Bonaparte, uttered in that same year: "He seems inclined to tyranny, and will become a despot if ever he attains to power, and then his name will become an opprobrium to posterity." [8]

"My dear fellow, you will see that on his return he will seize the crown," General Marmont told General Junot as they left Egypt.[9] While a club orator in Frejus

[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] Chuquet, III.
[9] Marmont, II.

greeted Bonaparte on his landing with the words: "Advance, General, advance, scatter the enemy, and afterwards, if such is your pleasure, we shall proclaim you king!" [10]

The light of the rising sun spreads across the whole of France, but on reaching Paris is dimmed by the November fog.

Here "no one expected him. . . . His return aroused no special enthusiasm. . . . It savoured too much of flight. . . . The Egyptian campaign appeared as a mad enterprise, the bulletins of the Eastern army as bombast, and Bonaparte himself as an adventurer." [11]

In military circles "he was accused of desertion, and from a military point of view, his conduct certainly was unjustifiable, and the Director Sièyes was perfectly right in saying when complaining of Bonaparte's lack of respect towards himself, that 'this insolent *gamin* ought to be shot!' " [12]

General Bernadotte proposes that the Directory should deliver Bonaparte to a court martial. "We are not sufficiently strong for that," replies Barras.[13]

"Bonaparte had to choose between the scaffold or the throne," asserts General Thiébault.[14] This is an exaggeration, but perhaps there were many who wished and hoped that such would be the case.

As a general rule, however, Bonaparte provided a topic of conversation in the Paris *salons*, like any other nine days' wonder, or a new fashion—say, a *coiffure à*

[10] Marmont, II.
[11] Pasquier, *Mémoires*, I.
[12] Thiébault, III.
[13] Masson, *Madame Bonaparte*.
[14] Thiébault, III.

la grecque, instead of *à la Titus*. The very aspect of the "African hero" aroused curiosity: he usually appeared in a somewhat strange civilian attire, a kind of blend between a Robespierre and a character from the Arabian nights: a tall felt "chimney-pot" hat, long green frock coat, a wide sash made out of a dazzlingly brilliant Oriental shawl, and a curved Turkish yataghan studded with diamonds. He had a worn-out look as if "he could barely last a week";[15] a hollow chest, sunken cheeks, a dark-olive complexion; the great eyes alone sparkled with an intolerable fire.

He is pursued by curious followers; but one does not easily come across him. He frequents no one, and nowhere, except the Institute. Here he receives an "atheistic chrysm" from his former and future antagonists, the "ideologues" and old encyclopaedists, the Volneys and Cabanis.[16]

He is only to be seen in Josephine's house, in the quiet *rue Chantereine*, now *rue de la Victoire*, so named in honour of Bonaparte.

He paces the garden. The autumn leaves rustle underfoot—how unlike their rustling is to that of the Syrian desert sands; how different, too, is the lunar sun of Brumaire reflected on the russet gold of the trees and the phantom pallor of antique vases, to the fiery orb of the desert. And within, in the semi-circular drawing room decorated with Pompeian frescoes, the almost nude bodies of fascinating women visible through the transparent draperies of Grecian *peplums*—how unlike they are to the ghastly plague-stricken human bodies at

[15] Vandal, II.
[16] Vandal, I.

Jaffa. The bronze sphynxes, too, ornamenting the chair arms bear no resemblance to that real Sphynx, the first sculptured human face which out there had gazed into the face of him who may well prove to be the last Man —*l'Homme*!

After a melodramatic quarrel with her husband over her infatuation with Monsieur Charles, which ended in a complete and easily won reconciliation, Josephine set to work to win over Bonaparte's enemies, over whom like a veritable Circe, she casts her spells. Thus is tamed the Director Sièyes, who henceforth joins his destiny to that of the "insolent *gamin*" he had but recently advocated to be shot.

It was here, in the *rue de la Victoire*, that the plan of the *coup d'état* was worked out. It was a perfectly simple one: to slay the Constitution by means of the Constitution: under pretext of a faked Terrorist plot, to transfer the sitting of both chambers, the "upper" Council of the Ancients, and the "lower," the Council of the Five Hundred, from Paris to the suburb of Saint-Cloud, and for the execution of this step to appoint General Bonaparte—Commander-in-Chief of the Paris district and of the entire "constitutional region."

It was to be an entirely family affair, carried out Corsican fashion. The driving force of the *coup d'état* would be Lucien Bonaparte, the twenty-four-year-old President of the Five Hundred, the very same "little viper-*briconcello*," who had anon so skilfully sprung a powder-magazine from beneath old *Babbo* Paoli: now he will explode one from beneath the whole of France. Here, too, are General Leclerc, husband of Caroline Bonaparte, and General Murat, Paulette's fiancé; as

commander of the cavalry regiment in Saint-Cloud, Murat will surround the Palace where both Chambers are deliberating. The rest of the conspirators, too, are all Bonaparte's men: General Berthier—head of the General Staff, Lannes—in command of the infantry, Marmont—of the artillery, the Corsican Sebastiani—of the squadrons of dragoons.

Already on the first day of the *coup d'état* his men are to surround the Palais Bourbon with the Five Hundred still in Paris.

There is nothing to fear from the Directory: only the "rotters" are in it, as the government party was nicknamed. The most "rotten" of them all is Barras, "a compendium of all vices ancient and modern." While Barras is licentiousness incarnate, Sièyes, the unfrocked abbot and regicide, is ideology and therefore impotence incarnate: a Homunculus in a jar and author of countless still-born constitutions. Surely Bonaparte would be able to dispose of such a crew!

The *coup d'état* was fixed for the 16th Brumaire, then postponed to the 17th which was a Friday. But Bonaparte is superstitious and afraid of unlucky days, so at his request it was again put off, to the 18th Brumaire—9th November. This bordered on insanity; how could secrecy be kept for forty-eight hours by a hundred and fifty conspirators?

Yet kept it was—"so great was the longing for a change," so "ripe" was the "pear."

Between seven and eight o'clock, on a dark November morning of the 18th Brumaire, the Council of the Ancients assembled by urgent summons in the gloomy hall of the Tuileries, the customary seat of its delibera-

tions. They listened standing to a report hastily drawn up by a special commission on a bogus Terrorist plot against the fatherland and liberty, and without debate decreed to transfer the sitting of both Chambers next day to Saint-Cloud. The execution of this decree was entrusted to General Bonaparte as the Commander-in-Chief of the Paris military district. Only the first half of the decree was legal, the second violated the constitution: the Council of the Ancients had no authority to appoint a Commander-in-Chief. This act was already the prelude to the Revolution: its axis shifted almost imperceptibly.

By ten o'clock Bonaparte escorted by a squadron of Sebastiani's dragoons arrived at the Palace, and surrounded by a brilliant retinue of generals of his staff, entered the Council Chamber.[17]

For the first time in his life Bonaparte was faced with the ordeal of addressing a parliamentary assembly. A fiery orator in his appeals to the soldiers, or when speaking eye to eye, he did not possess the gift of public speech, and it was strange to see this man, so calmly imperturbable under shell-fire, quail and stammer beneath the eyes of the "ideologue-chatterers."

"Bonaparte's incorrect pronunciation (in French) was a great drawback on state occasions," wrote a woman contemporary of his: "In general he had his speeches drawn up for him . . . and he would be instructed in the proper pronunciation of the words; but when he came to speak he forgot his lesson, and in a muffled voice with lips scarcely parted, would read the

[17] Vandal, I.

speech in an accent more strange even than it was foreign, and most unpleasant. The indisputable testimony of his accent to the fact that he was a foreigner struck one painfully." [18]

Neither a Frenchman, nor even a Corsican, but no one knows what—a man without a fatherland.

"The Republic was on the verge of destruction," said Bonaparte. "You realized this and issued a decree by which it will be saved. . . . There is no period in history to equal the end of the eighteenth century; nothing in the eighteenth century equal to the present moment. . . . With the help of all friends of liberty, of all who founded and defended the Constitution, I will become its guardian. We desire a Republic founded on liberty and equality, and on the sacred principles of national representation, and I swear we shall have it so."

"We swear!" exclaimed the generals of his suite as one man, and the deputies greeted their shout with tumultuous applause.[19]

"Thus he swore the oath of allegiance to the very Constitution he was out to destroy," comments General Marmont.[20]

From the Council Chamber Bonaparte descended to the Palace gardens to show himself to the troops. A small crowd had gathered behind them. The people's faces were calm, almost indifferent.

As he was coming out of the Palace, Bonaparte caught sight of a messenger sent by Barras, a secretary of his named Bottot, a small and puny man who was

[18] Rémusat, III., C. Hoey and J. Lillie.
[19] Vandal, I. Lacour-Gayet.
[20] Marmont, II.

trying to push his way through the crowd. Him Bonaparte chose to select as the scapegoat for the sins of the Directory. He approached Bottot, and after listening for a moment to his inarticulate mumbling, seized him by the hand and setting him aside, turned to the troops and the crowd of people, and exclaimed in a voice of thunder:

"The army has joined me; and I have joined the Legislative Chambers!"

A tremor ran through the troops and even the quiet crowd seemed impressed.

"What have you done to France?" went on Bonaparte, piercing Bottot with a withering glance; he no longer spoke as if instructed "on paper," but as if eye to eye, straight from the heart. "What have you done to France? . . . I left you peace, and returned to find war; I left you victories and find defeats; I left you Italy and her millions, and find predatory laws and destitution. What have you done to those hundred thousand Frenchmen, the associates of my glory? All have perished. . . . This cannot last any longer: in less than three years we should come to despotism. . . . A band of rebels calls us the enemies of the Republic; us, who have consolidated it by our deeds and valour. No, we desire to be no greater patriots than those brave warriors who shed their blood for the fatherland!"

"*Vive Bonaparte*! Long live the Republic!" the soldiers shouted enthusiastically and the crowd took up the cry.[21]

Events ran smoothly. Out of the five Directors Barras

[21] Vandal, I.

alone resigned, during the day; two others, Sièyes and Ducos, joined Bonaparte; Gohier was under domiciliary arrest in the Palace of Luxembourg, while General Moulins, left without troops, was powerless.

The Five Hundred, meanwhile, held their sitting in the Palais Bourbon. Alarmed by the rumours of a non-existent Terrorist, i.e., their own plot, and conscious of the imminence of a *coup d'état*, the Jacobins, who formed the majority of the Five Hundred, had worked themselves into a state of pitiable and impotent fury. The Palace was surrounded by Sebastiani's cavalry; the sight of the brass Roman helmets and drawn swords of the dragoons reminded the "chatterers and lawyers" of the 13th Vendemiaire; what had then been merely a menace, now bade fair to become a reality, and to bring their reign to an end. The desperadoes among them wanted to raise the population of the suburbs. But now times had changed. A *coup d'état* was in progress—had almost been accomplished, and excited practically no attention. All was absolutely quiet; not a breath of wind stirred, not a leaf fluttered: it was a super-calm revolution.

The long and narrow gallery of the Palace of Saint-Cloud known as the *Orangerie*, in spite of its twelve tall windows looking out on the garden, its Corinthian columns and stuccoed ornaments in the grandiose style of Louis XIV, resembled an empty barn rather than an assembly hall in which the Council of the Five Hundred was to hold its sitting on the 19th Brumaire. Since early morning carpenters and upholsterers were busy with

ladders and hammers nailing up carpets and tapestries to adorn the bare walls.

The air was so raw and cold that every breath became congealed into vapour. An iron stove stood in a corner; deputies clustered round it trying to get warm. Bonaparte entered the hall to inspect the preparations and speed up the upholsterers. The hammers went on tapping, the wood crackled in the stove. . . . Suddenly from the little band of deputies the words rang out so sharp and clear that Bonaparte could not fail to hear them:

"Ah, the bandit! Ah, the scoundrel!" [22]

In the cold, crude light of that windy autumn morning, other groups of deputies could be seen clustering together in the Palace courtyard and garden, still wet after yesterday's rain; members of the Council of the Five Hundred were parleying with those of the Council of the Ancients. Delay was becoming dangerous. The sight of the Palace encircled by troops and the recollection of Bonaparte's dictatorial manner the day before, alarmed not only the Extremists but many of the Moderates; what if they should fall into their own trap?

"He wants to be a Caesar, a Cromwell! This must be put an end to!" urged the more determined of the deputies.[23]

Twelve o'clock struck, half past, then one. At last the Assembly Hall of the Five Hundred was ready. The legislators, in their flowing flame-colored Roman togas, high Roman *coturnas*, and strange square caps adorned

[22] Vandal, I.
[23] Vandal, I.

with tricolour cocks' feathers, filed into the cold, bare barn of the *Orangerie.*

The President, Lucien Bonaparte, declared the Assembly to be in session, and almost at once the shouts arose:

"Down with the dictators! We are free here! We won't be terrorized by bayonets!"

Someone proposed to elect a commission—that panacea of parliamentarism—to investigate the charge of a "conspiracy." But the Jacobins would not hear of it, and continued to rage. Lucien rang the bell. He was hissed, threatened, whistled at. His Tribune was besieged by a crowd of deputies yelling:

"The Constitution or death!"

It was at last decided to take an individual oath of allegiance to the Constitution. This pleased Lucien: Bonaparte's enemies would lose precious time, and his friends might gain.

The ceremony of taking the oath was a slow and complicated procedure. Only three men were sworn in in the first five minutes; at this rate a whole day would be insufficient to swear in all the Five Hundred. The process was speeded up, and by four o'clock everyone had taken the oath.

The Council of the Ancients which sat in one of the adjoining halls, behaved with greater dignity. But they too were helpless. The deputies asked members of a special commission elected the day before to inquire into the "conspiracy," to explain more clearly the nature of the plot and its actual menace to liberty and the fatherland. This the commission, being itself in ignorance of the facts, was unable to do and took refuge in com-

monplaces. An endless discussion ensued. At the fatal moment when the destiny of the Revolution and their own hung in the balance and the sword of Caesar was already raised above their heads, these "ideologues and chatterers" went on with their chatter, wasted their energy in words, decided nothing and, finally, determined to postpone their resolution and await developments.

Meanwhile, Sièyes, his countenance livid with cold and more than ever resembling a Homunculus, sat in one of two armchairs placed by the fire in a hall on the lower floor of the Palace, for owing to the declivities of the soil the rooms were on different levels. This vast room, the Emperor's future study—with gorgeous gilded panellings—was quite bare. The fire burnt badly and in default of tongs Sièyes was poking it with a log. But it seemed as if no fire on earth, not even the sun, could ever instil warmth into the bloodless body of the Homunculus.

Bonaparte was pacing the room, his face bearing "an expression of considerable excitement." Every ten minutes his aide-de-camp, Lavalette, brought news from the Council of the Five Hundred. The news was bad: a number of the Jacobin deputies had already betaken themselves to Paris to stir up the suburbs; this of itself was not dangerous, although one could never know one minute how things would turn out the next. Far worse was the news that Bonaparte's bitterest enemies, the Jacobin Generals Jourdan and Augereau had arrived at Saint-Cloud; Bernadotte too was expected, whose greatest desire was to have Bonaparte summoned to a

court martial now not only as a "deserter," but as a "state criminal."

Bonaparte feels there is no time to lose, delay is fatal. Across the long suite of rooms he makes his way alone, accompanied only by two aides-de-camp, to the Council of the Ancients. In violation of the law, prohibiting an outsider to enter the Assembly Hall uninvited, he enters quickly, almost at a run; halts in the centre, near the Presidential Tribune, and begins to speak.

He speaks badly, confusedly as always before an assembly; forgets what he has to say, muddles his speech, loses himself in pompous phrases; the words seem now to stick in his throat, now to escape in an incoherent torrent.

"Citizens, you are upon a volcano. . . . Permit me, as a soldier, to speak out. . . . I am a victim of a calumny, allusions are here made to Caesar, Cromwell, a military government. . . . But had I wanted this, should I have hastened here to support the representatives of the people? . . . Time will not wait. . . . The Republic is without a government. . . . The Council of the Ancients alone remains. . . . Let them then take the necessary decision and say the word: I will act. Let us save liberty, save equality!"

"And what about the Constitution?" a voice is heard to cry from the Assembly.

"You have yourselves violated the Constitution," Bonaparte flings back after a moment's awkward pause. "No one respects the Constitution. Let me have my say. . . ."

"At last he will expose the plot!" Bonaparte's friends heave a sigh of relief, but their joy is premature: he

reveals nothing and, like the Commission, takes refuge in commonplaces.

"No, citizens, I am not an intriguer," he concludes unexpectedly: "I think I have given sufficient proof of my love for my country. . . . Were I her enemy, then you all must be Brutuses!"

He was conscious that he was not making headway and his confusion increased, like that of a *débutant* on the stage or a schoolboy at an examination.

Shouts of "Names, gives us names!" arose in the Hall.

But still he would give no names and continued to speak obscurely and monotonously, always beside the point, frequently exaggerating his statements. Suddenly taking refuge in "frightfulness," he repeated a phrase uttered long ago to the Sheikhs of Cairo:

"Remember, citizens, the god of battles, the god of victories is with me!"

This utterance, which brought the long-bearded Sheikhs and teachers of Islam to their knees, had no effect on the French legislators. A murmur ran through the Hall.

"As for you, my brave comrades-in-war, my trusty grenadiers," cried Bonaparte addressing the sentry at the door, "if any of the speakers here present, bribed by foreigners, dares utter against your General the formula of '*outlaw*,' let your thunderbolts descend upon his head!"

The President reproves and tries to calm him, by referring him to the principal topic of the plot, but in vain; he does not go beyond commonplaces, as if he too has become a "chattering lawyer."

"If liberty perishes, you will answer for its loss before the whole world, posterity and the fatherland!" he shouts as if about to plunge headlong into a chasm, and bolts from the hall like a hissed actor or expelled schoolboy

"Augereau, do you remember Arcola?" he asks as he crosses the Jacobin General.

The latter's reply is a silent, mocking smile. That smile tells Bonaparte that this is indeed a second Arcola for him. As then he dashed on alone with the colour to the fire-swept bridge, so now, too, he will have to face that Jacobin inferno—the Council of the Five Hundred—alone.

The narrow passage leading from the Palace to the *Orangerie* is so crowded that Bonaparte, who is now joined by his suite, has great difficulty in forcing his way through. His retinue remains at the door, while he penetrates into the Chamber alone. The parliamentary storm is still at its height. He elbows his way between the deputies and approaches the Tribune. At first he is undetected. Then suddenly a general pandemonium arises with shouts and yells of:

"Down with the dictator! Down with the tyrant! Outlaw him! Outlaw!"

The Jacobins close round Bonaparte, jostle him, shake their fists at him, seize him by the scruff of the neck. Crushed by the weight of their bodies, overcome by the heated breath of their mouths belching forth curses and invectives, he pales, staggers, seems on the point of fainting. "Daggers gleamed above his head," so his friends asserted afterwards, and his enemies denied.

Daggers or no daggers—there was every chance of their being there.

Seeing their General in danger, the grenadiers posted at the door dash to his assistance, striking the deputies right and left with their fists; the officers follow suit. Terrified spectators, men and women, crowd the exits; others, standing in the windows, open them and jump down into the garden. Amid shrieks and yells, a general scrimmage ensues. The place resounds with the screams of women.

"*Vive Bonaparte*!" a woman's piercing voice is heard shouting, as if she were being stabbed, and other voices in the crowd take up the cry.

The officers and soldiers are wrestling with the deputies. One of them has caught his foot in the carpet and lies sprawling full length on the floor; another grenadier's sleeve is rent from top to bottom.

Bonaparte is seized by the Jacobin Destrem, a man of Herculean size and strength.

"So that's what your victories were for!" shouts Destrem bringing his fist down on Bonaparte's shoulder, and "a blow from Destrem's fist is no joke."

At last the grenadiers have reached Bonaparte, snatched him from the clutches of the demoniacs and are shielding him with their bodies. The giant Destrem continues to rain blows, destined for the General, on to the soldiers' faces. Bonaparte is led, almost carried away, by two grenadiers. His face is deathly pale, his features distorted and eyes half-closed; his head drooping on his shoulder, lolls like that of a wooden doll. Is this "the god of battle, the god of victory"?

"Outlaw! Outlaw!" the demoniacs continue to yell in the hall.

Time was, during the Terror, when that cry spelt death: its echo was the crunch of the guillotine. Now its force had waned, though still it was full of menace.

The deputies climb on the Tribune, thumping it with their fists with a gusto sufficient to smash it into splinters, and demand that the question of "outlaw" be put to the vote at once.

Lucien Bonaparte, the President, is worthy of the occasion: he alone remains on the Tribune, calm and unperturbed, like a rock amid surging billows. He works a miracle: subdues the turmoil and in the momentary lull utters a few quiet words in defence of his brother.

But immediately the tumult rises again:

"To-day Bonaparte has tarnished his glory, ugh!"

"Bonaparte posed as a king!"

"Come, thou President, on with the vote, quick!" The Jacobins once more revert to the second person singular as in the good old days of the Terror.

Somebody votes something, but who or what, it is impossible to discern in the general uproar. As in the Palace Bourbon the day before, the Assembly spends itself in a state of stupid and impotent fury.

Bonaparte descends to the lower hall. At first he is so upset that he mumbles incoherently and recognizes no one.

"*General*," he says, addressing Sièyes, "they want to outlaw me!"

Sièyes is still sitting by the fire, trying and unable to get warm. He raises quiet eyes to Bonaparte, as if

his promotion to the rank of general causes him no surprise; and without moving a muscle of his Homunculus face, with constitutional pomposity delivers the prophetic utterance:

"They will themselves become outlaws!" adding after a moment's thought:

"The time has come to use sword play!"

To do that, however, some shadow of legality is necessary.

"Outlaw! General Bonaparte is proclaimed an outlaw!" shout two messengers from Talleyrand rushing into the room.

Bonaparte draws his sword, runs to the window, throws it open and, as on the field of battle, calls to the troops stationed in the courtyard:

"To arms! To arms!"

The cry is repeated from battalion to battalion. How long it will be before it is silenced: the multi-voiced echo of History will carry it further and further, to the very ends of the earth. . . .

Bonaparte with his followers runs out into the courtyard; he springs on his horse and gallops along the line of the grenadiers of the government guard.

"Soldiers!" he shouts: "Can I trust you?"

The grenadiers are silent; perhaps they are thinking; "Let the gentry fight, we don't care!" Sièyes, who is watching from the window, seems to catch a suspicious movement in their ranks, as if they would hurl themselves on Bonaparte.

But already he is galloping towards his loyal dragoons and regiments of the line. There he is greeted by an ovation. At a sign from him, there is a silence, and he

addresses the commanding officers; he complains to them of the Five Hundred, "those vile traitors of the fatherland and England's hirelings."

"I told them how to save the Republic, and they wanted to kill me!"

His countenance is ominous; there is blood on his face: in the first moment of despair and fury he had scratched the rash on his forehead due to the itches contracted at Toulon. At sight of this blood the soldiers believe that the Jacobins had indeed attempted to kill him.

"Soldiers! Can I trust you?"

"Yes! Yes! *Vive Bonaparte!* Long live the Republic!"

Still the grenadiers around the Palace stand silent. Time passes; it is nearly five o'clock; the early November dusk is closing in; the shadows underneath the bare trees of the park are deepening and inside the palace it is almost dark. Soon the fatal day will be merged into what may prove a still more fatal night. "Had Bonaparte been declared an outlaw at once, goodness knows what might not have happened," recalls an eye-witness.[24]

Escaping from the *Orangerie*, General Fregeville runs up to Bonaparte and whispers in his ear a message from President Lucien:

"If the sitting is not interrupted before ten minutes are over, I cannot answer for the consequences."

Suddenly Bonaparte's face becomes transfigured; his eyes flash lightning; once more he is "the god of battle,

[24] Marmont.

the god of victory." He understood—*remembered* what he had to do; free Lucien at all costs from the Jacobin hell.

He suits the action to the word. Before ten minutes had elapsed, the President is borne like "a shrine" out of the *Orangerie* into the courtyard by a squad of Bonaparte's loyal grenadiers of the 79th Regiment of the Line. Lucien mounts his horse and gallops towards Bonaparte. Brother is united to brother, the President of the Chamber to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, the Legislative Power to the Executive: at last the bayonet has caught on to a tattered fragment of legality: the Army will save the Republic!

"Generals, soldiers, citizens!" Lucien's voice sounds hoarse after so much shouting: "The Terrorist members of the Council of the Five Hundred, insolent brigands bribed by England, have revolted against the Council of the Ancients and propose to outlaw the Commander-in-Chief. . . . I hereby declare only those to be the true legislators of France, who will leave the Assembly Hall and rally to me here; the rest will be dispersed by force. . . . These assassins no longer represent the people, but the dagger!"

He points to Bonaparte's blood-stained face; then taking up his naked sword and pressing its point against his brother's breast, strikes a dramatic attitude worthy of the actor Talma, and exclaims:

"I swear that if ever my brother attempts anything against France's liberty I will slay him with my own hand!"

At the moment the "little viper's" memory failed to recall to him his own prophecy: "If Napoleon ever at-

tains to power, he will be a tyrant, and his name will become an opprobrium to posterity."

At last the grenadiers of the government guard are carried away by the general enthusiasm. The furious dragoons and men of the 79th Infantry are pressing on from behind. They have been set in motion and are ready to march at Bonaparte's bidding. At last he can give the word of command.

The officers raise their swords; the drums beat the alarm. Murat forms a column and leads it to the Palace. The sharp rat-a-tat-tat of the drums rises and swells in the deepening dusk above the heavy groundswell of many tramping feet.

Terrified, the crowd makes way for the soldiers, and lustily cheers the Caesar-Liberator.

"Hurrah! Down with the Jacobins! Down with '93! We're at the Rubicon!"

The roll of drums sounds muffled and far off through the thick Palace walls; nearer and nearer it comes echoing through the staircases and corridors—now it is at the very door.

The doors are flung open, bayonets gleam beyond.

Pandemonium still reigns in the Assembly which in its fury resembles an expiring wild beast. Slowly the column makes its way into the hall; at first it is a thin wedge, then gradually it spreads out till it occupies the whole front of the gallery. Some of the red togas take flight, the rest cluster together into a scarlet body at the back of the hall.

"Warriors! You are tarnishing your laurels!" a

voice yells from the Tribune, but the words are drowned in the roll of drums.

Murat shouts, "Citizens, you are dissolved!"

A second column under the command of General Leclerc enters the hall.

"Grenadiers, forward march!"

But Murat's order is more pithy:

"Kick 'em all out! *F . . . moi tout ce monde-là dehors*!"

The soldiers advance with crossed bayonets, and before this bristling steel the scarlet body melts away like wax before fire.

In five minutes the hall is cleared. Only a few diehards remain riveted to their seats like effigies or like the last Roman senators defying Attila's barbaric hordes. Stolidly, the grenadiers pick them up and carry them out, like naughty children, into the courtyard.

It is night, dark and empty. And ceaselessly the roll of the drums resounds in the darkness. Some of the deputies beat an ignominious retreat through the windows; the majority, however, surrendered to brute force with dignity as became legislators. Once in the courtyard, there is a sudden change. The soldiers greet "*messieurs les avocats*," the "assassins" of their general and "England's hirelings" with jeers, laughter, hisses, yells, cat-calls. The men in scarlet are at a loss what to do; stumbling over their long togas, they make a hasty exit across the courts, terraces and flower-beds to the secluded walks of the park, to the forest, into the darkness of the night; they flee as if pursued by some invisible foe; loosen and throw off their scarlet togas; rend them on the prickly brambles. Red patches of tattered gar-

ments gleam in the ditches and crevasses like the blood-stained trail of a fugitive beast. It is the She-Wolf of Revolution, torn and lacerated by her own Wolf-Cub.

Ça ira, ça ira,
Les aristocrates à la lanterne,
Ça ira,
On les pendra!

Come on, come on,
Aristocrats to the lamp post!
Come on, come on,
They will be hung!

the soldiers sang lustily, as they marched that night along the Versailles high-road from Saint-Cloud to Paris. Their conscience was clear, they had done their duty: they had saved the Republic and the Revolution.[25]

"The *vaudeville* is played out!" someone said mockingly to a deputy of the Five Hundred on meeting him that night in the park of Saint-Cloud, and laughed in his face.

Yes, the *vaudeville* of the Revolution was played out.

That same night Talleyrand was guest at a gay little supper held in the quiet home of a woman friend of his in Saint-Cloud. The conversation turned on the day's events. Someone raised a glass to the light and while admiring its sparkling contents, murmured with a smile:

[25] Vandal, *Avénement de Bonaparte,* I.

"Ah, General Bonaparte, General Bonaparte, your behaviour to-day was not up to the mark!"

That is: "You played the coward!"

What, indeed, had happened to him when the grenadiers had carried him out of the Jacobin hell? Had "the bravest man that ever lived" been really "frightened" of lawyers and chatterers?

Yes, terror, such as he never experienced either before or after, had taken possession of his soul. Terror of what?

> Ultima Cumaei venit jam carminis aetas;
> Magnus al integro saeculorum jam nascitur ordo . . .
> Aspice convexo mutantem pondere mundum.
>
> Behold the Sibyl's latest era come!
> Ages in mighty round revolve anew. . . .
> Behold
> Where bows the vast rotundity of the world.
>
> Virgil, IV Eclogue.

Bonaparte was right: there is nothing in the history of the world to equal the French Revolution; nothing in the Revolution to equal that moment—the 18th Brumaire—that pinnacle of pinnacles, the extreme apex at which "the world's axis vacillates," and the world's centre of gravity is displaced.

"It was the beginning of a new era—the rule of *one*," was the correct definition of one contemporary.[26] And of another: "The entire government was reduced to him *alone*." [27] Bonaparte and the Revolution, man and man-

[26] Pasquier, *Mémoires*, I.
[27] Marmont, II.

kind, All and One . . . such are the shifted world-epochs—aeons.

In the ancient church-Slavonic there exists a word of wonderful depth and beauty: *translation*, meaning death. When a man dies, he is "translated," transferred from one state of being into another. Something akin to this was happening at that moment: the aeon of mankind was dying and the aeon of Man being born into the world.

Tumult is the attribute of small revolutions; calm—of great ones. "On my return, I found Paris as quiet as if *nothing had happened*, or as if Saint-Cloud were four hundred kilometres away." [28]

The world's axis had shifted, everything had moved from its customary place as if turned upside down—and yet not a leaf had stirred, not a breath of wind had passed: a supercalm revolution. No one took any notice of it—Bonaparte alone was conscious of it because of that sudden unearthly terror which froze the blood in his veins. Though he seemed a "coward," when his face paled like that of a wooden doll, in reality he still remained "the bravest man that ever lived."

That moment was perhaps the most heroic of his life. Another man would have been crushed like a worm by that weight, ground to pulp between those two millstones—aeons, but he remained standing: Bonaparte died, and Napoleon arose.

We cannot experience the sensations of a man whose soul is "translated" during his lifetime from his own into another body. Yet this is what happened to Bona-

[28] Thibaudeau.

parte when his soul, quitting its own revolutionary body, entered that of a Caesar.

Yet he experienced also another terror, greater still. "None but a lunatic or a malefactor would want to slay the Revolution." He knew it could not be slain, because within it eternal truth and eternal life were engrained. He, the immortal Cub of the immortal She-Wolf, knew this better than anyone else, for was not the blood flowing in his own veins but the milk he had suckled from her iron nipples? "I am the Revolution. *Je suis la Révolution*," Napoleon the Caesar will say this as did Bonaparte. A glance at his face reveals her image reflected in it. No, he did not slay her. He did worse: he loved her with a terrible passion, he committed incest with her; like Oedipus he cast dishonour upon his mother. Only Oedipus acted in ignorance, whereas he *almost* knew—*remembered* the nature of what he was doing, and nevertheless committed the act; nor could he abstain from it, because it was for this that he was sent into the world.

He knew—remembered, too, that this would never be forgiven him. Because of this he paled on hearing the word: "Outlaw!" and before his eyes there gleamed not the dagger of the Jacobins, but the eternal poignard of Destiny—Nemesis.

Oedipus and Napoleon are both drawn on by Destiny. Whether they will or no, they are doomed to repeat in their human tragedies the divine mystery: Dionysos, son of Earth and Heaven, begets himself from his own mother, Demeter—Earth; he gives birth to himself, from aeon unto aeon, in the person of the second Dionysos, Bacchus—the shadow of Him Who Cometh.

To subdue the God-beast, the man-eating Sphinx, Oedipus solved his riddle: Man, Napoleon did the same, but in deed not in word: from his Mother, the Revolution, he gave birth to himself out of time into Eternity. Bonaparte begat Napoleon—man begat Man.

From the maternal bosom of Ancient Night, of primaeval Chaos, rose the Sun of Revolution: Napoleon the Man.

NOON

FROM BRUMAIRE TO TILSIT

I

THE CONSUL

1799—1804

With the passing of the Directory and the establishment of a Consulate of three, the supreme power became virtually vested in Bonaparte, who as First Consul was placed greatly above both his colleagues.

Power in exchange for peace—such was the silent pact concluded between him and France. To obtain peace, however, it became first of all imperative to reconquer Italy; was it not for this that he had "deserted" from the army in Egypt and returned to France? A protracted war was out of the question both owing to the desperate state of the finances and also because of the country's equally desperate longing for peace. The enemy had to be annihilated by a lightning stroke.

In March 1800, the Austrian army under General Melas, "wallowing" to use Bonaparte's expression [1] in the Ligurian Riviera where it was laying siege to Genoa, had cleared Piedmont, Lombardy, the whole of Upper Italy and most important of all, the passes across the Helvetian Alps. By taking advantage of this Bonaparte decided to descend on Melas by storm, cut him off

[1] Vandal, *Avénement de Bonaparte*, II.

from his base of operations and destroy his army. To do this, he had to repeat Hannibal's fabulous passage across the Alps.

The First Consul left Paris on the 6th May, and on the 15th the ascent of the Alps, that assault by forty thousand human ants of the ice-girt colossi—Simplon, Saint-Gotthard and Saint-Bernard—had commenced.

The main passage lay across Saint-Bernard, between Martigny and Aosta. Through narrow gorges, skirting the eternal snow-line, across yawning chasms and slippery ice-covered paths fraught with danger even to a single pedestrian, the endless columns of infantry, cavalry and artillery wound their way in single file. The cannon, taken off the gun-carriages, were fitted into hollowed-out tree trunks rounded up in front and planed at the bottom to make them glide over the snow. The gunners harnessing themselves to these sleighs, a hundred to each, drew them along. Blinded by snow storms beating fiercely in their faces, the men stumbled, fell exhausted, rose and pulled again.

At the most arduous places, martial music struck up, the drums sounded the alarm, and the soldiers stormed the heights as they would a fortress, climbing on to one another's shoulders, scaling perpendicular cliffs, tearing the skin and nails off their blistered and bleeding hands as they clutched at the sharp projecting stones. And all this ghastly march went on to the accompaniment of merry jokes and revolutionary songs . . . in a glorification indeed of mankind's triumphant progress *per aspera ad astra.*

The descent was even harder than the ascent. Winter with hard-frozen snow still reigned on the northern

slopes; on the southern slope, spring had already set in, and the snow had become soft and porous. At every incautious step, the thin upper crust of snow gave way, and men, horses and mules sank and were sucked down into the deep drifts and crevasses filled with melted snow, or skidding over the steep paths made particularly slippery by the night frosts, were hurled headlong into the chasms.

Bonaparte himself narrowly escaped a like death. His mule stumbled on the brink of a chasm, and had not the guide pulled it back by the bridle, both mount and rider would have been dashed to pieces on the rocks below.

On the 27th May the French army poured down into the undefended plains of Lombardy. By this masterly manoeuvre, Bonaparte acquired immediate strategic superiority over the Austrians who were taken unawares and placed in a most unnatural position with their back to France, facing Lombardy and cut off from their operative base. The door of the enemy's house being thus forced open, Bonaparte walked in. He descended upon Italy like a thunderbolt. Whereas General Melas imagined him to be still in Paris, on the 2nd June he had already entered Milan.

The first part of his task was accomplished; there remained the second: to defeat Melas. The latter crossed the river Pau, but judging his position to be unfavourable, awaited reinforcements, and by continuous marching evaded an encounter with the French. To overtake him, Bonaparte stretched out and weakened his own fighting line. As an excellent strategist, Melas realized this, and by a clever manoeuvre massed all his forces on

the wide plain of San-Guiliano and Marengo with the object of breaking through Bonaparte's centre.

The great battle which decided the fate of Italy, Austria, France—of all Europe, in fact, commenced on the 14th June. Fortune, in the form of superiority in artillery—a hundred cannon against fifteen, favoured Melas. Confident of victory, the Austrians fought like tigers; four general and twelve cavalry attacks of the French were repulsed; village after village was captured, and the French ranks were decimated by sweeping grape-shot fire. In spite of their heroic stand they realized the impossibility of fighting against such overwhelming odds, and by two o'clock began slowly to retreat all along the line.

Bonaparte then threw his last reserve, eight hundred grenadiers of the Consular Guard, into action. Forming a square this "granite bulwark" stood immovable as a rock against the furious attacks of the Austrian infantry, cavalry and artillery, but could do nothing beyond covering the retreat, nay, almost flight of the army, and finally was itself compelled to recede step by step barely covering four kilometres in three hours.

The battle was lost. Melas, shell-shocked but flushed with triumph, dispatched a messenger bearing the news of victory to Vienna.

Bonaparte saw that he was beaten: he had staked and lost all: Italy, France, Brumaire; a Caesar but a short while ago, he was once more a "deserter," "an outlaw and state criminal," the assassin of his Mother-Revolution, a "lunatic or a malefactor."

"Yes, we are beaten," he said to his generals, as he sat on the road-bank at San-Guiliano chewing a blade of

grass: "but it is only two o'clock; if one battle is lost, there's time for a second one, provided Desaix arrives with the reserves."

He tossed away the blade of grass and took up another. He was quite calm. Yet in his death agony twenty-one years hence he recalled that moment, and death itself had no greater terror than that memory.

"General Bonaparte, General Bonaparte! Your behaviour to-day was not up to the mark—you behaved like a coward." Whoever said that, let him look at Bonaparte now; he might then possibly understand that the Man who had overcome all earthly terrors, could only be daunted by unearthly awe.

"Ah, here is General Desaix!" Bonaparte said coolly, as if he knew—*remembered* it would be so—or *was*. He heaved a deep sigh, got up, sprang on to his charger and like a lightning-flash appeared among his troops.

"Soldiers, I need your life, and you must sacrifice it to me!" [2]

The first victim is Desaix, Napoleon's beloved brother, stricken by a bullet through the chest, just as he rushed into battle; as he fell from his horse, he barely had time to cry out: "Here's death!" But the hero's deathless spirit passed to his men. "To die, but in avenging him!" and with this impulse Desaix's six thousand reserve corps hurled themselves upon the enemy. One hundred Austrian guns stand silent, as the fugitives rally to combat; the pursued become the pursuers, and the defeated—victorious.

"The Man of Destiny!" murmurs Melas, horror-

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[2] *Mémorial*, III.

struck, as he gazes at Bonaparte's lightning-like countenance.

The Austrian army capitulates. Piedmont, Lombardy, the whole of Italy to the Mincio—all are surrendered.

It is Marengo, the victory of victories—the noontide of Napoleon's sun.

France is in a delirium of joy: "Victory—peace!"

The peace with Austria is signed at Lunéville on the 9th February, 1801; that with England on the 25th March, 1802 at Amiens. After ten years, the wars of the Revolution are ended. Universal peace seems established.

Bonaparte fulfilled his part of the contract: he took power and gave peace.

His first peace task is to breathe once more into France her Christian soul, torn out by the Revolution.

The *Concordat*, the Treaty between France and the Holy See, was signed on the 15th July, 1801. The Gallican church was re-instated in all her rights, and re-united to Rome with the Pope as her spiritual head. Bishops were to be nominated by the First Consul and consecrated and ratified by the Vatican; no papal bull could be promulgated, nor a church convocation summoned in France without the authorization of the government.

"This was the greatest victory over the spirit of Revolution, all the succeeding ones were but its natural outcome," writes a contemporary: "The success of the *Concordat* testified to Bonaparte's perspicacity to fathom people's hearts. 'Would you like me to invent some new and unknown religion?' he asked the opposers of the Concordat: 'No, I take a different view; I need

the old Catholic faith; it alone possesses a firm hold over the people, can draw their hearts to me and remove all obstacles.' " [3]

"The greatest enemy to be feared now is not fanaticism but atheism." [4] By this saying of Bonaparte's all the eighteenth century atheism is repudiated, and not that alone.

"Besides political motives which were soon destined to supersede the purely ecclesiastical, his mind was influenced by secret thoughts of religion, and in his heart he still treasured the old sentiments implanted therein from his childhood; these were revealed at many solemn instances of his life and in his last moments they stood out with such force as to leave no room for doubt," [5] writes the same contemporary.

Not in vain had his mother dedicated him even before his birth to the Blessed Virgin Mother, or was he born on the 15th August, the day of Our Lady's Assumption; not in vain when listening in the deepening shadows of the lime walk in the park of Brienne, to the chimes of the *Ave Maria*, had he learnt to love them for all his life.

On Easter Sunday, the 18th April, 1802, a solemn mass, the first since the Revolution, was celebrated in the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris at the conclusion of which were made public the Treaty of Amiens and the *Concordat*—peace with men and with God. Once more, after a silence of nine years, the Cathedral bell pealed out its Easter message over Paris, and all the

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[3] Pasquier, *Mémoires*, I.
[4] J. Bertaut.
[5] Pasquier, I.

bells throughout France echoed back: "Christ is risen!"

"The enemies of the First Consul and of the Revolution rejoiced, and his friends and all the army were astounded," writes General Thiébault.[6] In the army all the atheist generals of '89 were indignant.

"A splendid ceremony. It only lacked that million men who died to destroy what we are restoring," muttered the Jacobin General Augereau after the Easter-day service of the 18th April.[7]

"I had more difficulty in restoring religion than in winning battles," Napoleon recalled afterwards.[8]

"We should remember," Pius VII, the Emperor's prisoner and well-nigh martyr of Fontainebleau, said in 1813, "that after God, religion owes its restoration mainly to Napoleon. . . . The *Concordat* is both a Christian and an heroic act of salvation." [9]

Bonaparte's second peace task was the *Code.*

"My fame lies not in my victories, but in the Code," [10] he used to say, and: "My Code is France's anchor of salvation; posterity will bless me for it." [11]

"Bonaparte's victories inspired me with greater dread than respect," owned one of Louis XVI's former ministers: "But when I studied the Code, I was penetrated with awe. . . . Where did he take it from? . . . Oh, what a man we possessed in him! In very truth, it was a miracle." [12]

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[6] Thiébault, III.
[7] Lacour-Gayet.
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] Antommarchi.
[12] Lacour-Gayet.

"The Code was one of the most *beautiful* creations ever made by man," is General Marmont's accurate definition of the main impression produced by the Code: its "beauty" lies in its simplicity, clearness, precision and sense of measure—these pre-eminent qualities of the Mediterranean Helleno-Roman genius, from Pythagoras to Pascal—the genius of Apollo, the sun-god.

Napoleon could find no better definition of this sense of measure, than by employing his native Italian, Latin, Mediterranean word: *mezza termine*, *i.e.*, the medium between two extremes. That is "the harmony in contrast" of Heraclites,[13] or as Napoleon put it, "a well-squared genius." "Out of contrasts there arises beautiful harmony; out of conflict everything is born," is another saying of Heraclites.

This was what Nietzsche meant by calling Napoleon "the last incarnation of Apollo, the sun-god." In the deepest metaphysical sense he, like the god Mithras, the Invincible Sun, is likewise the eternal *Mediator*, *Misotes*, *Pacificator*, the Uniter of contrasts,—of the new and the old, of morning and evening in the light of noon.

The strength of power lies in establishing "a general medium of well-being"; this truth he grasped as none had done before him.[14] "All exaggeration is insignificant. *Tout ce qui est éxagéré est insignifiant*," is a saying of Talleyrand's; and Bonaparte, creator of the Code, might well have endorsed it. This signifies: all that is exaggeration lacks divinity; the divine lies only in a sense of measure.

[13] Fragm.
[14] Vandal, *Avénement de Bonaparte*, II.

"In order to consolidate the Republic, its laws must be founded on moderation," Bonaparte wrote in the proclamation to the nation signed by the three Consuls immediately after the 18th Brumaire. "A sense of measure is the foundation of morality and man's primal virtue. Without it, he is a beast. A party can exist without moderation, but not national representation." [15]

And again in the State Council: "All the misfortunes by which our beautiful France was overwhelmed during the Revolution should be attributed to those obscure metaphysics which in their cunning probing into the origin of things, aspire to found upon them the legislation of nations, instead of adapting laws to a knowledge of the human heart and the precepts of History." [16]

"Obscure metaphysics" are the "ideology" of revolutionary extremes; to these he opposes "divine measure," "*mezzo termine*." From inanimate knowledge—oblivion to living "knowledge—remembrance," from intellect to intuition—such is Bonaparte's course, the way of the Code. Its object is the goal unattained by the Revolution "to consolidate and sanctify the kingdom of reason, the complete realization and absolute triumph of all human faculties." [17] Not the kingdom of abstract mechanical reason but that of the living and organic Logos.

"In spite of all its defects and shortcomings the Napoleonic Code contained the supreme measure of natural justice and wisdom ever attained in human legislature. In sanctioning the equality of all Frenchmen be-

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[15] Vandal, I.
[16] Pasquier, II.
[17] *Mémorial,* II.

fore the law, the enfranchisement of land, civic liberty and absolute judiciary free will, the Code thereby legalizes the Revolution. Within its bounds its molten lava becomes petrified in immutable shapes of granite and bronze. Herein is unification, a judiciary *medium*, *un moyen terme*; here the claims and interests of different classes find approximate satisfaction. The Code is essentially democratic in that it safeguards the people from a restoration of feudal privileges, and is at the same time a bourgeois Code created for that middle class which made the Revolution and finally retained the power in their hands." [18]

Subsequently, "under the autocratic régime (of Napoleon the Emperor) the principles of liberty were almost entirely destroyed, but equality before the law, impartial jurisdiction, the restitution of offenses committed by private persons as well as by state authorities remained in greater force under his rule at a time when he was at war with half the universe, than under succeeding governments in times of peace." [19]

Like the Revolution, the Code is universal. All European nations adopted it, "because it brought them those benefits of the Revolution which appeared most tangible and comprehensible to the majority: progress without destruction, and bereft of abstract extremes and acute changes. The Code triumphed and remained in force mainly because of the absence in it of all that was too transcendental and exaggerated." The Code is the spirit of the Roman Empire adapted to modern Europe. "Napoleon like ancient Rome, having lost his

[18] Vandal, II.
[19] Holland.

power over the universe bequeathed to it his laws." [20]

"I have sanctified the Revolution; I have infused its spirit into our laws," he said six months before his death; [21] and again, two days before the end, in the delirium of his death agony: "I have sanctified all its principles (of the Revolution). . . . I have embodied them in my deeds and laws. . . . There is not one which is not sanctified." . . . [22] It is as if he were trying to justify himself of some hideous crime the opprobrium of which overshadowed his whole life; was it that which the Jacobins accused him of—the worse than murder, the dishonor of his Mother—the Revolution? The Code is that act of incest which the son commits with the mother, Napoleon is here joined to the Revolution. . . . The Jacobins, however, are blind to the main issue: they fail to discern the divine mystery underlying the human tragedy; that which causes the ruin of Oedipus—Napoleon, brings salvation to mankind: the fruit of incest is that new aeon—the "golden age."

"Those who had not seen France both before the 18th Brumaire and after, cannot even picture to themselves the ravages produced by the Revolution." [23] This means: no one can estimate the value of Napoleon's work for France.

"The exchequer is empty; the soldiers go unpaid, unclothed and unfed; all the roads are impassable; no bridge can be crossed without danger of falling through; rivers and canals are no longer navigable; public build-

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[20] Vandal, II.
[21] Antommarchi, I.
[22] Antommarchi, II.
[23] Pasquier, I.

ings and monuments are crumbling; the churches are closed, the bells silent; the fields deserted; banditism, destitution and starvation stalk the land." [24] That is before the 18th Brumaire, and after: "The country is emerging out of chaos." [25] "Everything starts at once and progresses with equal rapidity: legislature, administration, finance, trade, communications, the army, the fleet, agriculture, industry, arts and sciences—all come into being and blossom out suddenly as if by magic." [26]

"There is more efficiency within that brain, and these great deeds accomplished within two years, than in a whole dynasty of French kings," says a member of the Council of State, Roederer, speaking of Bonaparte.[27] "I have now governed for nearly a year," is Bonaparte's own testimony: "I have closed the *Manège* (a Jacobin stronghold), repulsed the enemy, restored order into the finances, and administration, and yet not shed a drop of blood." [28] And later, when he does shed it, he will always remember that the fame of peace is worth more than that of war. "I regret being compelled to live in bivouacs, because this diverts my attention from matters that lie nearest my heart—the stable and efficient organization of banks, industry and commerce," he writes in 1805 to the Minister for Finance.[29]

At the time of the Italian campaign, although as Talleyrand expresses it, "he soars in Ossian-like exaltation far above the earth," [30] Bonaparte knows already

[24] *Mémorial,* II. Pasquier, I.
[25] Marmont, II.
[26] Pasquier, I.
[27] Roederer.
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] Arthur Lévy.
[30] Lacour-Gayet.

that the price of meat for which the commissariat charges ten *sous*, is only five *sous* on the market.[31] In *sous* or in atoms, the god-Demiurgos is one and the same.

As if by a miracle, all the living tissues of the country are revived, and its wounds healed. "France is tasting the joys of recovery," and her physician is Bonaparte.[32]

"Confidence in the future and boundless hope—such were the effects of the 18th Brumaire," writes a contemporary.[33]

"The rapture experienced by France emerging from her wars defies the most fiery imagination," adds another.[34]

"O Corse a cheveux plats, que la France etait belle
Au grand soleil de Messidor!"

A departmental prefect wrote to the Minister of the Interior: "Suddenly everything is changed. The events of the Revolution seem to recede twenty years back, and their traces become effaced day by day. One sees serenity returning to men's souls, and their hearts expanding in hope and love. . . . Only two Revolutionary dates are fixed in the people's memory: the 14th July and the 18th Brumaire; all that lies between is forgotten." [35]

Forgotten, suffused in the radiance of the "sun of Messidor," the joys of the "golden age."

"At whose first advent, o'er the world shall cease
The iron race of men, a golden rise. . . .

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[31] Arthur Lévy.
[32] Vandal, II.
[33] Marmont, II.
[34] Pasquier, I.
[35] Vandal, II.

On thee, oh, child, uncultivated Earth
The firstlings of her bounty shall bestow,
The foxglove and the ivy scattering wide,
Acanthus mingled with Egyptian bean.
Goats of their own accord their milky dugs
Shall carry home, nor herds the lion fear;
Thy very cradle shed thee dainty flowers;
The serpent and the poisonous herb shall die,
And without stint Assyrian spikenard bloom. . . .

Then shall the plain grow yellow by degrees
With harvest, blushing grapes on brambles hang,
And rugged oaks distil a hoary dew.

The time is near at hand:

Come for thy glorious birthright, heavenly born,
Illustrious child of Jupiter! Behold,
Where bows the vast rotundity o' th' world,
The earth, the sea's expanse, the depth of heaven,
All things are gladdened at the age's dawn."
Virgil. Eclogue IV.

Never, perhaps, since the age of Augustus—the age of Christ—did men believe so fervently in the advent of the Golden Age, as during those three or four years of the Consulate.

"Men were on the highest pinnacle possible to humanity, because of the mere presence of this Beloved, Miraculous and Terrible Being, the like of whom had never before been seen in the world; and could, like the first human beings in Paradise, deem themselves lords of all God's creation." [36]

Never before, perhaps, were men so prepared to say: "*adveniat regnum tuum.*" But to whom to address these

[36] Léon Bloy, *L'Âme de Napoléon.*

words—whether to the son of "incest," Dionysos, "the son of Zeus," according to Virgil; or to the Son of God, according to the Gospel—this they knew not, nor possessed the vision of. And because of this blindness, the happiness of the Golden Age was so short-lived and vanished like a dream. Yet, who knows but that men still live by the memory of that fleeting vision.

II

THE EMPEROR

1804

"Please, Bonaparte, don't become a king! It is that horrid Lucien who is egging you on, but you must not listen to him," Josephine said coaxingly to Bonaparte.[1]

However, to comply with her request was beyond his power, even had he wished so to do: from the 18th Brumaire onwards he already was a "king"; the drab chrysalis was decaying over the golden butterfly.

When on the 20th January, 1800, the First Consul was moving from the Luxembourg to the Palace of the Tuileries the quantity of court carriages for the cortège ran short, and hired ones had to be added, the numbers on the back being pasted over with paper.[2] Such was the saintly poverty of the Republic.

In the Council of State Bonaparte was addressed familiarly as "citizen Counsul." [3] He dressed with such simplicity that a Royalist once mistook him for a footman, until encountering his eyes he recognized his identity.[4]

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[1] Bourrienne, III.
[2] Abrantès, III.
[3] Roederer.
[4] Vandal, II.

Before the celebration at Notre Dame, of the Treaty of Amiens, the officiating clergy asked the First Consul whether his two colleagues should also be censed like himself. "No," replied Bonaparte, meaning thereby that before the face of God he already was the Caesar. The golden butterfly was breaking forth from the grey chrysalis.

> Et du Premier Consul, déjà par maint endroit,
> Le front de l'Empereur brisait le masque etroit.

His enemies here rendered him greater assistance than his friends; the attempts on his life made in times of peace paved the way to the throne more surely than his victories in war.

On the 7th Germinal, 1800, soon after the First Consul's departure for Italy, practically on the eve of Marengo, a plot for the overthrow of his government was discovered in Paris.

The conspirators in their manifesto exposed Bonaparte's "base intrigues" before and the "criminal aims" of the 18th Brumaire, and urged the necessity of "once again saving the Republic and Revolution." The plot was to have been set in motion after the First Consul's departure. At the head of it stood General Bernadotte, then Minister of War; Lucien Bonaparte, Minister of the Interior; the Prefect of Police, Fouché, and the Commandant of Paris, General Lefebvre. "The conspiracy was suppressed without publicity, and remained almost unknown to the general public." [5]

On the 3rd Nivose—24th December, 1800, an infernal

[5] Thibaudeau.

machine exploded underneath the carriage of the First Consul as he was driving along the Rue St. Nicaise. The windows were smashed not only in Bonaparte's carriage but in that of Josephine which followed, wounding her daughter Hortense in the arm. Fifteen neighbouring houses were damaged, three passers-by killed and many wounded. Bonaparte was saved by a miracle: his coachman being drunk was driving at a gallop, and thus escaped.

The First Consul was on his way to the Opera, where Haydn's oratorio "The Creation" was being given. He entered his box and with perfect calm acknowledged the tumultuous applause and cheers which greeted him, so that none of the public guessed what had happened. "These scoundrels wanted to blow me up," he said to the occupants of the box and turning to his aide-de-camp added: "Bring me a programme." [6]

He thought the "scoundrels" were Jacobins, but was mistaken: they were "*chouans*," by which name the Breton Royalist conspirators were then designated. The Jacobins, however, were quite willing to co-operate with the Royalists provided they could thus get rid of the First Consul.

"The air is thick with daggers," reported the Prefect of Police, Fouché.[7] Bonaparte knew well that Fouché was more than willing to add his own to the collection.

A "Society for the assassination of tyrants" [8] was founded in 1800, which under the Empire developed into the "League of the Philadelphs." Its members pro-

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[6] Masson, *Napoléon et sa famille*, I.
[7] Lacour-Gayet.
[8] Miot de Mélito, I.

fessed the opinion that "Napoleon had cast a slur on the glory of Bonaparte. . . . He first saved and later slew our liberty." [9]

During the Consulate, in 1800-1804, the air was indeed "thick with daggers." Yet the would-be assassins of Bonaparte are the satellites of Napoleon: they are helping to smash the tight-fitting mask of the First Consul which encases the brow of the Emperor, and to destroy the grey chrysalis imprisoning the golden butterfly.

The more bitter the hatred of dozens, the greater the love of millions. "What should we do if he were to perish? Who would protect us from the *red chasm*?" is the general cry; people are still persuaded that the "red chasm" of the Terror may open at any moment and engulf France.[10]

In October, 1800, Fouché showed the First Consul a pamphlet written by his brother Joseph on "The Parallel between Caesar, Cromwell and Bonaparte." Joseph's object, of course, was to help Napoleon; but to mention such "parallels" was like *parler d'une corde dans la maison d'un pendu*. For this Joseph was banished into honorary exile as Ambassador in Spain. The butterfly is still concealed within the chrysalis, but the case is becoming very brittle.

When, on the 16th Thermidor—4th August, 1802, after a plebiscite recording over three million votes, the Senate proclaims consulship for life, no one can fail to understand whither the next step will lead to. Bonaparte was informed of this decision by the President of the

[9] Constant, *Mémoires*, II.
[10] Vandal, II.

Senate at a solemn meeting of that body held in the Palace of the Tuileries.

Bonaparte replied: "Senators, the life of a citizen belongs to the fatherland. The French people desire that mine should be dedicated to its service. . . . I obey. . . . By my efforts and with your help, by the will and confidence of this great nation, liberty, equality and the welfare of all Frenchmen will be safeguarded against the caprices of fortune and eventualities of the future. . . . The best of peoples will also be the happiest, according to its deserts, in order by its own happiness to promote the welfare of all Europe. Sustained by the consciousness that by the will of Him in whom all things have their being, I have been called to restore on earth justice, order and equality, I shall await without regret or fear of the judgment of posterity, the striking of my death knell." [11]

"I am called by the will of Him in whom all things have their being." This means: "I am called by God, I am the chosen and anointed of the Lord."

"So this is the outcome of the Revolution which began in such an universal outburst of enthusiasm for liberty and patriotism!" are the indignant comments not of the Jacobins only, but of moderate republicans. "Such a profusion of blood shed on the battle fields, so much wealth destroyed, so many sacrifices have merely brought us to exchange one king for another, and to supersede a Royal house which had reigned over France for centuries by a family absolutely unknown ten years ago, and which barely became French at the outbreak of the Revolu-

[11] Lacour-Gayet.

tion. Have we indeed fallen so low, that we should seek our salvation in despotism and submit to those Bonapartes unconditionally?" [12]

Meantime the Bonapartes are already quarreling over the succession. After Louis renounces it for his infant son, Joseph, back from exile and indignant at being overlooked, delivers a most indecorous speech in the Senate, in which he "curses the First Consul's ambition and invokes his death as a benefit to the family of Bonaparte and to France." [13]

While his brothers are merely a hindrance, his enemies again assist him. Bonaparte's would-be assassins pave the way to Napoleon.

Early in 1804, forty conspirators against the life of the First Consul, mainly in the pay of England, were arrested in Paris. Among them were a Breton "*chouan*" Georges Cadoudal, and two generals, Moreau and Pichegru. The suspicion arose—unwarranted as was irrefutably proved—that Louis Bourbon Condé, duke of Enghien, one of the last scions of the ancient Royal house of France, was involved in the conspiracy and had even at one time secretly visited Paris from his usual residence in the little town of Ettenheim in the principality of Baden, near the French frontier on the Rhine.

On the 15th March a platoon of French gendarmes secretly crossed the border, penetrated into Ettenheim, arrested the duke and brought him to Paris where he was imprisoned in the fortress of Vincennes. Here at two o'clock in the morning of the 21st March, he was shot in the moat by order of the court martial. The whole

[12] Miot de Mélito.
[13] Miot de Mélito, II.

court martial was a farce; the actual sentence originated with Bonaparte.

Enghien's innocence was so obvious, that even his bogus judges solicited his acquittal. Did Bonaparte know the duke was innocent? In any case he might have known.

"We are again plunged into the atrocities of '93 by the very hand which drew us out of them," says Count de Ségur: "I was overwhelmed. . . . I used to be proud of the great man I served, whereas now. . . ." He lacks the courage to add: "Now the hero is turned into a criminal." [14]

Why did Bonaparte murder Enghien?

"These people wanted to destroy the Revolution by destroying me. It was my duty both to defend and to avenge it. I have proved of what it is capable." "Once and for all I have silenced both Jacobins and Royalists." [15]

Silence them he did not, and it were better for the Wolf-Cub not to speak of the She-Wolf Revolution done to death by her own offspring.

"Am I a dog, to be killed by any passer-by?" [16] I possessed the natural right to self-defence; I was constantly attacked from all sides . . . air guns, infernal machines, plots. . . . At last I grew tired of it, and took advantage of the opportunity to transfer the Terror back to London. . . . War for war. . . . Blood for blood. . . . After all, my own blood too is not muck. . . ." [17]

All this might have been true, had not the Duke of

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[14] Ségur, II.
[15] Rémusat, I.
[16] Ségur, II.
[17] *Mémorial*, IV.

Enghien been innocent and had not Bonaparte known it *for certain.*

Three days before his death, the Emperor ordered the envelope containing his testament to be brought to him, opened it, added something, sealed it up again and returned it to his attendants. This is what he wrote: "I had the Duke of Enghien arrested and tried because that step was essential to the safety, interest and honour of the French people, when the Count of Artois was maintaining by his confession sixty assassins in Paris. Under similar circumstances I would again act in the same way." [18]

Again, all this might have been the truth, if he had not possessed the *absolute* certainty that the Duke of Enghien had never been a conspirator.

"In spite of all he may say, I believe in his remorse: it pursued him to the grave. It was this torturing memory which compelled him to add that sentence in his testament," says Chancellor Pasquier, who knew Napoleon intimately and was an eye-witness of the whole affair.[19] So it seems. All his life-long he was tortured by this remorse, and with it he died.

The best and simplest epitome of the case comes from Lord Holland, a true friend of Napoleon's: "A crime is not to be palliated, much less justified by its consequences. . . . And the sacrifice of a man . . . will and ought to remain a blot on his memory." [20]

England could rest content: henceforth the hero's white robes were stained with blood; the Eumenides

[18] *Mémorial,* IV.
[19] Pasquier, I.
[20] Lord Holland, *Foreign Reminiscences.*

had penetrated into his house and their dagger would become more threatening to him than those of all his assassins.

The deed, however, was done. The moat of Vincennes in which the innocent descendant of the Bourbons met his death marked the boundary between the old order and the new, the cutting of the navel-string which joined the new-born Empire to ancient Royalty. The body of Enghien served as a stepping stone for Bonaparte to the Imperial throne; his blood was the Imperial purple.

"Accomplish your task and render it immortal, O great man." In such words the Senate on the 28th March, a week after the duke's execution, implores the First Consul to accept supreme power.[21] Still Bonaparte affects to misunderstand their meaning. "You have considered it desirable so to modify certain existing institutions as to assure forever the triumph of liberty and equality. I request you to develop your idea to its logical conclusion," he writes to the Senate. "The supreme welfare of France demands that the government of the Republic should be placed in the hands of Napoleon Bonaparte, as hereditary Emperor," is the Senate's reply.[22]

The chrysalis has burst open and the butterfly is spreading its wings.

On the 18th May, 1804, a long file of state coaches, under the escort of mounted cuirassiers entered Saint-Cloud. It was five o'clock in the afternoon, the very hour when on the 19th Brumaire, Murat's grenadiers had dispersed the Council of the Five Hundred with their bayonets. The senators were ushered into the very room

[21] Ségur, II.
[22] Lacour-Gayet.

where, on that same 19th Brumaire, General Bonaparte, just rescued by the grenadiers from the Jacobin inferno, had paced up and down frantically, scratching his forehead marked by the Toulon itches and muttering incoherently to Sièyes, the Homunculus, warming himself by the fire: "General, they want to outlaw me!"

"Sire! . . . Your Majesty!" It was his erstwhile colleague, Cambacérès the Second Consul, who thus addressed Bonaparte in the name of the Senate: "At this precise moment, the Senate is proclaiming Napoleon Bonaparte Emperor of the French."

" '*Vive l'Empereur*!' Cheers and applause, both somewhat meagre it must be owned, arose from the crowd of senators," writes an eye-witness. "Napoleon replied in a loud and firm voice. All appeared ill at ease except himself. . . . In the general embarrassment some addressed him alternately as 'citizen First Consul,' or 'Sire,' or 'Your Majesty.' The whole ceremony lasted about a quarter of an hour. . . . On our way back to Paris I noticed crowds in the streets. The firing of the salute and the procession of carriages had attraced many loafers. However, that night there were neither festivities nor illuminations. I believe the people did not even know what had happened, or else remained indifferent." [23]

Napoleon at first contemplated being crowned at Aix, the ancient capital of the Carolingian dynasty. "Paris," he said, "is the scourge of France. Parisians are scatterbrained and ungrateful; they are heaping insults upon me." [24] At such a moment he is ready to repudiate the heart of France: already he is conscious of being

[23] Miot de Mélito, II.
[24] Masson, *Le Sacre de Napoléon.*

not only the Caesar of France, but of the universe.

Pope Pius VII consented to come to Paris to crown the Emperor: one good turn deserves another—for the *Concordat*—the Coronation.

"I should recommend the consummation of this act for the sake of its consequences beneficent to religion, the church and to the state," the papal legate in Paris, Caprara, wrote to the Vatican.[25]

"By an act of Divine Providence and the Constitution of the Empire, hereditary Imperial dignity is conferred upon our family," so ran the manifesto. This signified that not only would Napoleon be crowned, but that his consort would be likewise, contrary to all tradition: nearly two hundred years had elapsed since the last woman to be crowned in France.

At the last moment the Pope learnt that Josephine was not Napoleon's wife but a "mistress," because there had been no religious marriage. To crown such a couple would be sacrilege. This the Pope absolutely refused to do, and demanded that a proper marriage ceremony be performed. Napoleon submitted unwillingly, for already he was thinking of divorce, being loth to link the destiny of the new dynasty with the barren Josephine. The cardinal, uncle Fesch, being hastily summoned, a marriage ceremony was privately gone through without witnesses in the Emperor's study.

The rite of the coronation included the administration of the Holy Sacrament to the newly-crowned sovereign. It was Napoleon's turn to refuse point blank: he regarded the receiving of the Holy Communion without faith in the

[25] Masson, *Le Sacre de Napoléon*.

sacrament as hypocrisy and sacrilege. "Do not let us burden his conscience and ours," decided the Pope, and with his own hand wrote on the draft of the ceremonial: "*Non communicarano*, will not communicate." "Sooner or later, you will come to this and be one with us," he told the Emperor.[26]

Napoleon here was contradicting himself: while refusing one sacrament, communion, he claimed another—his anointment to kingship, for that is a "fifth sacrament," according to St. Peter Damieni: "*sacramentum quintum est inunctio regis.*" The refusal to communicate rendered the anointment null and void: of what value was a sacrament performed over a man who did not belong to the Church?[27]

On the 11th Frimaire—2nd December, 1804, a ceremony of extraordinary magnificence, though chilling in its dull splendour, took place in the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Many of those present remarked that the Emperor had "several times stifled a yawn," and when the Pope anointed him with the Chrysm, he merely appeared impatient to wipe it off. The expression of his countenance was one of indifference, as in a "magnetic sleep." Did he, with the prophetic intuition which never failed him at the crucial moments of his life, realize—*remember*, that he was being crowned as "a sacrificial victim"?

"*Vivat Imperator in aeternum!*" proclaimed the Pope and held out his hand for the crown.

But Napoleon forestalled him: he took it up and re-

[26] *Mémorial*, III.
[27] Masson.

moving his golden laurel wreath, himself placed the crown upon his head.[28]

"Il cielo mi la diede; guai a qui la tocchera! Heaven has given it me, woe to him who touches it!" he exclaimed later, when being crowned in Milan with the iron crown of the Lombard kings.

"Has liberty been given to man that he should forever be bereft of its fruits? Whenever he stretches out his hand to pluck it, will death forever be his lot?" ejaculated that honest old Jacobin Carnot, when alone among all the members of the Tribunal he voted against Napoleon's proclamation as Emperor.

"We have just created an Emperor," wrote Paul-Louis Courrier: "To think that a man like Bonaparte—soldier, commander, the first military captain in the world—should want to be addressed as 'Your Majesty!' To be a Bonaparte and become a 'Sire.' He aspires to debase himself. . . . Poor man! His mind is lower than his destiny." [29]

Mgr. de Pradt, Bishop of Malines, did not conceal from Napoleon that "he found no trace of the coronation ceremony having produced a good impression" in any part of France which he had visited in his ecclesiastical capacity. "It always seemed to me as if you had crowned yourself by your sword alone," he told the Emperor to his face, adding to himself: "all this is mere childish self-deception." [30]

Beethoven had dedicated his Third Symphony to

[28] Abrantès, III.
[29] Lacour-Gayet.
[30] Masson.

Bonaparte, but on learning that he had become an Emperor, struck out the dedication and inscribed instead: "Symphonia Heroica to the Memory of a Great Man."

It contains a funeral march, as if Beethoven too knew—*remembered* that Napoleon had crowned himself as a sacrificial victim.

The Emperor's coronation mantle was embroidered with golden bees, identical with those found in the tomb of Childeric I, one of the most ancient kings of France.

What is the meaning of this?

"Then went Samson down to Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him and he rent him as he would have rent a kid. . . . And after a time . . . he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion; and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion." And he proposed a riddle to the Philistines: "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." [31]

Had Napoleon been reminded of this riddle at St. Helena, and of the bees woven into his Imperial mantle, he might perhaps have interpreted their significance. He had rent himself, as Samson did the lion: "and, behold, a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion"—the honey of the "Golden Age," the sweetest honey of sacrifice. Such is the meaning of the words: "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

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[31] *Judges*, 14.

III

HIS VICTORIES

1805—1807

"I owe my power to my fame, and my fame—to my triumphs. My victories made me what I am, and by them alone can I retain power. A new-born government must dazzle and amaze; the moment it ceases to do so, it falls," Napoleon was wont to say.[1]

He knows—remembers, that the final and greatest triumph of all lies in wresting her world-supremacy from England. All his wars, from Toulon to Waterloo are but one endless duel with England. It is England that he seeks all the world over. At first he feels her to be behind Italy, Egypt, Syria; then at the back of Austria, Germany, Spain, Russia. He seeks the ocean beyond the dry land, blazes his trail across dry land to the high seas. Himself an islander, he is ever at war with an island. "Oh, had I but ruled the seas!" was his lament at St. Helena. He knows—remembers, that to rule the seas means world-dominion.

"I shall crush England, and then France will become the queen of the world," he said after Marengo.[2] "Let us concentrate all our energies on the fleet, bring England

[1] Lacour-Gayet.
[2] Vandal, *L'avénement de Bonaparte.*

to her knees, and then all Europe will be at our feet."

The peace concluded at Amiens, which was expected to be a lasting one, endured exactly fourteen months. The idea of a landing in England, of dealing a death blow right into the heart of the enemy, pursued the First Consul and later the Emperor like an obsession. On the 19th July, 1805, he arrived at the French encampment near Boulogne on the Channel coast. For the past two years preparations for the landing in England had been afoot; excavators were at work on land and in the harbour; and docks, arsenals, dykes, breakwaters, trenches and fortifications were under construction. The "Great Army," which first received that name at Boulogne, was in process of creation. Six army corps were stationed upon the hilly amphitheatre which crowned the harbour, with the Imperial headquarters in the centre.

"The National Flotilla" of 2,365 craft of different type and tonnage, varying from small gun-boats to battle ships with a crew of twelve thousand, could carry 160,000 men, 10,000 horse and 650 cannon.

The complicated procedure of landing could be accomplished within eight hours provided the Channel, only thirty-two kilometres wide, could be crossed. "Given eight favourable hours of night and the destinies of the world will be settled. If we can hold the straits, were it only for six hours, we shall become the lords of the world," wrote first the First Consul to Admiral Ganteaume, and later the Emperor to Admiral Latouche-Tréville.[3]

[3] Lacour-Gayet.

A triumphant arch is erected at Amiens bearing the inscription: "The road to England." An ancient Roman axe, purported to have come from the camp of Julius Caesar, Britannie's first conqueror, has been dug up on the site occupied by the Imperial pavilion: it is as if two thousand years of universal history had reached their culminating point at Boulogne.

Napoleon's birthday, the 15th August, was chosen for the ceremony of the distribution of the crosses of the newly founded Order of the Legion of Honor. The Emperor was seated on the iron throne, said to be a thousand years old, of King Dagobert, placed on an eminence whence like a modern Xerxes, he could command a full view of the encampment and of the sea covered with the ships of his flotilla. A motion of the hand—so it seemed—would suffice to crush England's might and make him the lord of the world.

No one in Paris, however, felt any confidence in the plan. "It is generally scoffed at. Indeed, an enterprise more ruinous, useless and absurd would be difficult to imagine," [4] wrote Bourrienne in his *Memoirs*. Numerous cartoons were in vogue. One of the most popular depicted a flotilla of nutshells in a wash basin; an English sailor seated on the edge is smoking a pipe, and the French fleet is scurrying away chased by the smoke as by a gale. People in England were laughing too, albeit trembling with fear.

"The question as to whether Bonaparte seriously contemplated a landing in England was subject to great controversy," writes General Marmont. "I am in a posi-

[4] Bourrienne, III.

tion to affirm that he was perfectly serious. This campaign was the cherished dream of his life, his greatest hope. The possibility of a landing was unquestionable. Bonaparte intended to destroy the Dover forts by bombardment and compel their immediate surrender." " 'We were lucky not to have started on the expedition against England just at the moment when Austria declared war on us with such overwhelming forces,' I once observed to the Emperor at the beginning of the Austrian campaign. 'Had we after landing in England, occupied London, which was inevitable, the Strasburg women alone would have sufficed to defend our frontiers,' replied Bonaparte. It was the most cherished desire of his life." [5]

"I should have proclaimed a republic in England, abolished the aristocracy, the House of Lords, expropriated all those who opposed me, and established liberty, equality and the supreme power of the people. A large city like London contains a multitude of rabble and dissatisfied elements; a strong party would have supported me. I should also have stirred a rebellion in Ireland." [6]

"We should be welcomed by the majority of Englishmen. One regular battle, the issue of which was certain, would be sufficient after our landing to open the road to London. The English people, groaning under the yoke of the oligarchy, would immediately have rallied to us; we should have appeared as their allies and liberators; the magic words of: Liberty, Equality, would have opened their hearts to us." [7]

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[5] Marmont, II.
[6] O'Meara, I.
[7] *Mémorial*, I.

The success of the landing depended on a naval diversion, the execution of which was entrusted to Admiral Villeneuve who was dispatched with the French fleet to the Caribbean islands in order to draw off the English squadron from the Channel. The first part of the programme was successfully carried out: Villeneuve reached Martinique, with the English fleet in pursuit. On the return voyage, however, having encountered Admiral Nelson off Ferrol, Villeneuve turned southward instead of proceeding to Rochefort and Brest as ordered, whence re-inforced by French and Spanish ships he was to have appeared unexpectedly in the Channel and clearing it for a few days of English shipping, "rendered the success of the landing almost certain." [8]

"Come out into the Channel, come out, there is not a moment to lose—England is ours—come out if only for twenty four hours," wrote Napoleon to Villeneuve on the 22nd August; but on the 23rd the news arrived of Villeneuve's move to the south. The fate of the landing operation was sealed.[9]

As years ago in Syria and Egypt, the gigantic chimera had once again exploded like a bubble: the mountain dissolved itself into a mole-hill. Millions had been scattered to the winds. The National Flotilla proved to be nothing but "nutshells in a wash basin," and the whole Boulogne encampment was abortive. As one exploded chimera was then replaced by another, so now also he originated a new plan: to raise all Europe in arms against England, to pit all the forces of the dry land against those of the high seas.

[8] Pasquier, I.
[9] Lacour-Gayet.

On that same day, the 23rd August, Napoleon addresses a proclamation to his soldiers, beginning with the words: "Austria, bribed by English gold, has declared war on France." He orders the camp at Boulogne to be raised and dictates a plan of campaign against Austria. Every movement of the Great Army, the number of marches, the distribution and destination of the separate units are foreseen and calculated with mathematical precision. Here knowledge is united to prognosis, mathematics to clairvoyance.

The Boulogne encampment is raised, and the army of one hundred and eighty thousand men is transferred as by the wave of a magic wand, from the Channel coast to the banks of the Danube. Its movements are executed with such rapidity and precision, that could they be observed from above, they might be taken for the beautiful, rhythmic dance of the Eleusinian choruses with the god Dionysos himself as their leader.

> And it seemed like a god from on high
> He soared, watching o'er all, above them:
> With the light of his wond'rous eyes
> The moving spirit of all.[10]

Napoleon's empire is built upon eight pillars—eight victories. The four southern—Lodi, Arcola, Rivoli and Marengo which brought the countries round the Mediterranean seaboard, from Gibraltar to the Adriatic under his sway; and four northern—Ulm, Austerlitz, Jena and Friedland by which was achieved the conquest of Central Europe, from the Rhine to the Nyeman.

The southern victories are hard won; the northern lightly. In the former Napoleon is the rising sun; in the

[10] Tyutchev. Transl. by Miss M. Adamson.

latter—the sun motionless in the zenith of its noontide splendour. The former are like the rays of sunrise—many hued and iridescent; the latter—uniform and dazzlingly-white as the light of noon. His power is deepened by the former and widened by the latter; and so the contrast continues: National and universal; personal and impersonal or such as conceals his image even as the noon-day sun is dazzlingly-invisible; heroic and . . . but our vocabulary possesses no adequate word to express their character. The ancient Greeks would have called them "Daimoniac," but Goethe alone amongst us moderns might have understood its meaning; for does not he define Napoleon as a "daimoniac" being, certainly not in our Christian sense, but in the ancient pagan meaning of "*daimon*"—i.e., "terrestrial god"? "Daimoniac" laws, to those who are ignorant of them, appear to be "miraculous" and "supernatural"; yet in themselves they are possibly as simple as those which we are accustomed to regard as "necessary" and "natural."

What indeed is the secret of Napoleon's truly miraculous sway over men and events? "A kind of magnetic premonition, *une sorte de prévision magnétique*," according to the testimony of his former schoolfellow and secretary Bourrienne.[11] "I always possessed an inner consciousness of what awaited me." "Nothing ever happened to me which I had not foreseen," Napoleon says himself.[12]

This always was a characteristic feature of his; but in those two years of 1805—1806, between Ulm and Friedland—he possessed it in a supreme degree.

[11] Bourrienne, IV.
[12] *Mémorial*, IV. Miot de Mêlito, I.

Men are weak because they are blind and ignorant of the future. Napoleon knows—*remembers* the future as if it were the past. To know is to dare. He is omnipotent because omniscient. He sees through walls as through glass; traverses them as would a spirit; carries off victories with such facility that it seems as if there was no need for him to extend a hand to pluck them—for they fall of themselves like ripe fruit at his feet. This is not war, but a triumphal march. Had it lasted—he would have traversed and conquered the whole world. Yet even during those two years, this is but a lightning flash—some forty days, from Ulm to Austerlitz. Afterwards the brilliance begins to wane: Friedland is the last of these radiantly light victories. It seems as if he himself is conscious of this: he ends the war with the peace of Tilsit, possibly in the hope that it may prove a lasting one: England will be vanquished by the European blockade, the forces of the dry land pitted against those of the high seas.

The southern victories, like lightning-flashes, defy description; still more so the northern ones—with their fixed, dazzlingly-white radiance of noon-tide. Besides, what is there to describe? It is always the same, an endless repetition: he knows—and dares; foresees—and conquers.

Napoleon's plan of the Ulm operation consists in spreading a huge net from the Rhine to the Danube to catch the Austrian Field-Marshal Mack. The latter practically walks into the trap laid for him. "One might think it was not Mack who drew up his plan of campaign

but myself," says Napoleon as he crosses the Rhine on the 1st October 1805, and adds the prophecy that "Mack's Caudine forks will be at Ulm." [13]

Everything happened as he predicted: the whole Austrian army was caught at Ulm like fish in the net.

Perhaps Mack was neither the fool nor the coward that he seemed—he merely was cowed by the hypnotic gaze of the "daimon" as a bird is hypnotized by the eye of a snake. He might have abandoned Ulm or shut himself up within with his army and awaited the arrival of his Russian allies. He did neither, and on the 20th October capitulated almost without fighting.

In less than three weeks, Napoleon having annihilated or dispersed eighty thousand Austrians, reached Vienna which fell also almost without resistance. He then crossed the Danube in pursuit of the Austro-Russian army which was retreating into Moravia.

On the 1st December, 1805, the eve of Austerlitz, Napoleon rides out to inspect the troops. The soldiers, mindful that this is the first anniversary of his coronation, greet the Emperor with sixty thousand flaming torches made of pine and straw fixed to their bayonets—it is a celebration of a fiery vigil in honour of the god Mithras, the Invincible Sun—the Emperor himself. It is as if he had infected them all with his "magnetic premonition": for them the morrow's "sun of Austerlitz" had already risen in the dead of night.

The battle commenced at dawn on the 2nd of December. The Austro-Russians, like Mack, are the obedient executors of Napoleon's plan, and walk into the trap

[13] Lacour-Gayet.

prepared for them in the marshy hollow of Telnitz. Murat's cavalry attack forces them back towards Austerlitz. Concealed in the ravine of Golbach by a thick pall of mist, the army corps of Soult and Bernadotte suddenly emerge and charge the heights of Pratzen. At this moment, as stated in the bulletin: "The sun of Austerlitz rose radiant, *le soleil d'Austerlitz se leva radieux!*"

Not with the crown of the Caesars bestowed on him by the Pope, but with this sun the Emperor crowned himself.

October 14th, 1806—Jena. The Saxon Pastor who directed the French to a by-pass across the Landgrafenberg, might have been less of a Judas than his reputation leads us to suppose; possibly he too, like the unfortunate Mack, was entranced by the hypnotic gaze of the "daimon" and realized the futility of opposing him. Again the morning mist favours Napoleon, and the sun of Jena, the "sun of Austerlitz" rises radiant, shedding its glory over the French army, as it precipitates itself from Landgrafenberg on to the unsuspecting Prusso-Saxons.

Austerlitz won Austria for Napoleon; Jena gave him Prussia. On the 27th October, 1806, he enters Berlin as a conqueror and the sword of Frederick the Great is dispatched to Paris.

Destiny's first warning comes at Eylau on the 8th February, 1807. Here the Russians fight as none ever fought against him before.

"Never since the invention of gunpowder was there such a slaughter," writes an eye-witness.[14] The army

corps of Augereau was almost entirely destroyed by gunfire. A fierce storm drove blinding snow into the face of the French; it fell so thickly as to obliterate everything fifteen paces ahead; the men could distinguish neither friend nor foe, and fired on their own units. The horror of 1812, the awful image of Destiny rose up before Napoleon for the first time upon that icy night of blood and iron—Eylau.

The Russians retreated at last, abandoning nothing to the enemy save the field of battle strewn with thirty thousand killed and wounded.

"What an awful sight!" Napoleon kept repeating as he rode across that field: "It should inspire sovereigns with a love of peace and abhorrence of war!" Did he recall his own words at Jaffa: "Never before had war seemed so abhorrent to me"?

Still Eylau was but a fleeting cloud across the sun; it rolls away, and once more the sun is shining radiantly.

On the 14th June, 1807, the anniversary of Marengo, there is Friedland. It is always the same: the "magnetic premonition" of victory is victory itself, the noontide radiance—dazzlingly-white. "As Napoleon at midday was dictating the disposition of the battle, his countenance radiated such joy, as if already he knew himself to be victorious." [15] He lunches in view of the enemy the bullets whistling round, and when reminded of the danger says with a smile: "However much the Russians may try to interfere with our lunch, we shall interfere

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[14] Marbot, II.
[15] Ségur, III.

still more with their supper." When reviewing his troops, he acknowledges their acclamations by saying repeatedly: "This is a happy day, a happy day, the anniversary of Marengo!" and his face shines like the sun.[16]

At the beginning of the battle the French were only twenty-six thousand against the Austrians' seventy-five. Napoleon's generals advise him to put off the encounter till the morrow. "No, no, one must not depend on the enemy repeating the same mistake twice," he replies, observing that Count Bennigsen, the Russian Commander-in-Chief, had so disposed his troops that they could be encircled from the rear and annihilated. As Napoleon had predicted, by "supper time" the Russians are in full retreat and Bennigsen crosses the Nyeman with the remnants of his army.

The Nyeman is that mysterious boundary which divides East and West. On reaching the river, Napoleon paused as if reflecting: to cross or not to cross? He did not—perhaps *remembering* that his hour had not yet come.

It is noon, June the 25th; mid-day and midsummer.

> The languid breath of drowsy noon,
> The river's lazy flow,
> The languid trail of melting clouds
> Across a molten sky.
> As if asleep, all nature lies
> Wrapped in a misty heat.[17]

How sultry it is on the sandy shallows of the Nyeman; the air is redolent with the smell of sun-warmed water,

[16] Marbot, II.
[17] Tyutchev.

fish, fragrant wild strawberries and the pungent breath of the pine forests beyond. How sultry and heavy it is; surely, a storm is brewing.

A ferry is anchored in mid-stream of the Nyeman opposite the little town of Tilsit. On the ferry a wooden pavilion has been erected the entrance to which is decorated with an interwoven double monogram encircled in a garland of freshly-cut leaves—"N" and "A": "Napoleon" and "Alexander." At a given signal, two boats put off from the opposite banks, Napoleon's from the left, Alexander's from the right. They meet. The two Emperors step on to the ferry and amid the deafening acclamations of both armies stationed on either bank, in which the Russian "Hurrah!" mingles with the French "*Vive l'Empereur*!" they unite in a brotherly embrace. It is the embrace of East and West, of Europe and Asia. The noontide of summer, the noon of day—the noontide of Napoleon's sun. At its zenith the sun unites the two celestial hemispheres—East and West.

"I detest the English as much as you do," says Alexander. "In that case," Napoleon replies, "peace is concluded."

"Never had I been so greatly prejudiced against anyone as I was against him; but after forty minutes' conversation all my dislike vanished like a dream." [18] "There was no one whom I regarded with so much affection," [19] Alexander recalled later.

They endeavour to cajole one another. Napoleon defines Alexander as "a charmer." [20] He sees through him

[18] Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre*, III.
[19] Abrantès, II.
[20] Vandal, II.

nevertheless, or imagines he does: "A true Byzantine, astute, wily, deceitful, he will go far," [21] says Napoleon. "Flatter his vanity," is Alexander's advice to his friends, the Prussians.

The Peace was signed at Tilsit on the 8th July 1807. "Tilsit will determine the fate of the world," says Napoleon.[22] All Europe, from Petersburg to Naples, is against England; the dry land pitted against the high seas. The colossal chimera is almost materialized.

The sun has reached its zenith; the supreme point attained, after which decline sets in.

"Already in 1805 shrewd observers could detect symptoms of Napoleon's decline," says Stendhal.[23]

This appears incredible: 1805—1807, Austerlitz-Tilsit: the noontide of Napoleon's sun. Yet so it must be: for at noon the sun is already beginning to sink towards the west.

"Poor man, I pity him; he will be the envy of his fellowmen, and the most miserable of them all." Always he knows—remembers this, and more than ever now at the summit of his glory. To hold all within his grasp, to attain unheard of heights and suddenly to be bored, to lose every desire. Power, majesty, fame, might—all that men prize most in life have suddenly palled and become empty and devoid of value. Something else appears desirable; what that is he neither does nor will know until the very end. Even at St. Helena, he neither would have understood nor believed if told that, already after Tilsit, in full noontide, he had longed for night to come,

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[21] *Mémorial*, II.
[22] Vandal, I.
[23] Stendhal.

thirsted for sacrifice—to rend himself as Samson had rent the lion at Timnath.

"Men of genius are like meteors. They must be consumed in order to lighten the darkness of their age." To be consumed, to die—to become the sacrificial victim.

What is this message that the golden bees are humming in the folds of the Imperial purple? It is this: "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

Napoleon's true sacrificial soul is an invisible midday star.

> My soul would be a star . . .
> Yet not when from the heavens at night
> Stars gaze upon our sleeping world
> Like living orbs of light . . .
> Veiled by the flaming splendour of the sun,
> In daytime, radiant as the gods they shine,
> Shedding from realms unseen
> A flame more pure and more divine.[24]

Having reached its zenith, Napoleon's sun sinks towards the west, and the evening shadows are reflected in its noontide splendour.

[24] Tyutchev.

EVENTIDE

FROM TILSIT TO MOSCOW

I

THE DUEL WITH ENGLAND

1808

"England expects every man to do his duty!"

This battle-signal, sublime in its simplicity and worthy of a great people, was hoisted on the mast-head of Admiral Nelson's flag-ship the *Victory* in the Battle of Trafalgar, which took place in Spanish waters off Cadiz on the 21st October 1805, the day after the fall of Ulm, the first of Napoleon's world victories.[1] Nelson "did his duty"—he laid down his life for his country and, dying, had the joy of knowing that the destruction of the Franco-Spanish fleet by the English had, beyond all doubt, established England's world supremacy in the face of her most formidable foe.

"Several French vessels were sunk in a gale after a rash encounter with the enemy," was Napoleon's comment on Trafalgar, making the best of a bad job. No one, however, is taken in: the fleet once destroyed—Marengo, Ulm, Austerlitz, Jena, Friedland—all his victories on land become fruitless. As years ago at Abukir in Egypt, so now at Trafalgar in Europe, he is trapped like a mouse. Of what avail will it be to him if he

[1] Lacour-Gayet.

traverses and conquers the whole of Europe and Asia to the confines of India? Land without the freedom of the high seas would be a living death or perpetual confinement: "St. Helena—small island."

The continental blockade proclaimed by decree in Berlin on the 21st November, 1806 was the answer to Trafalgar. All European ports were to be closed to English ships, those on the high seas to be captured, the cargo confiscated as war booty and British subjects treated as prisoners of war; even postal communications with England were to cease. To throttle her with her own manufactures which could find no outlet in foreign markets—such was the object of the blockade. "These enemies of all nations must be placed outside the pale. It is a struggle for life or death," wrote the *Moniteur*.[2]

Had the blockade any chance of success? The answer to this is not so simple as it then seemed and still seems to many.

Had the blockade proved successful, Europe, not England, would be the first to suffer, shut in behind a gigantic wall extending from Archangel to Constantinople. To realize his monstrous plan, Napoleon committed himself to the necessity of conquering or annexing all European countries, mainly by aggressive or predatory methods; in this way were seized Portugal, Spain, Holland and the Papal States. He likewise committed himself to a rupture with Russia, which proved the main cause of his downfall. And all this was in

[2] Lacour-Gayet.

vain, because outside Europe an outlet for English goods could be found in the colonies.[3]

"It was futile to declare a blockade on England, when the English fleet blockaded all the French ports," wrote a contemporary. "By this insane act Napoleon chiefly harmed himself. The un-making of twenty kings would have aroused less hatred. . . . The blockade might have been successful, had it been judiciously adhered to by all the European governments; one open port destroyed its whole effect." [4] The French government itself created chinks in this watertight wall built up round the entire continent by issuing "licenses" for the import of necessary goods.[5]

"It was madness for which everyone suffered." [6] To kill England, Europe had to commit suicide: the entire continent was covered by the blockade as by a vast vacuum dome.

All these arguments merely point to the dangers and difficulties of the blockade; but difficulty and danger do not necessarily signify impossibility, particularly for Napoleon. "The impossible is only a bogey for the faint-hearted and a refuge for cowards." [7]

It should be remembered that only a small part of his strategical plan of the duel with England was actually carried out; the principal point—that of the control of the Mediterranean as an operative base against England—remained unfulfilled through no fault of his. Had the plan materialized in its entirety, the Napole-

[3] Lacour-Gayet.
[4] Bourrienne, IV.
[5] Marbot, III.
[6] Bourrienne, IV.
[7] Houssaye, *1815*, I.

onic eagle would have spread its wings all over Europe, spanning it from Gibraltar to the Bosphorus. "All European nations, like separate corps of one great army, would have marched to the final assault of England." [8] After Europe—Asia; all the land forces of the earth pitted against those of the high seas.

Part of this plan was apparently communicated to Alexander during their "honeymoon" at Tilsit. A letter by Napoleon dated 2nd February 1808, throws some light upon the subject. This is what he wrote: "An army of 50,000 men composed of Russians, French and possibly Austrians, marching from Constantinople into Asia, before it reached the Euphrates, would make England tremble and force her to her knees before the continental powers. I myself am in Dalmatia, Your Majesty is on the Danube; a month hence our army might reach the Bosphorus. The blow would repercuss in India, and England would be conquered. . . . The world, by our friendship, is placed in an unprecedented situation. . . . We both prefer to live in peace and quietude in the midst of our vast dominions promoting their enlightenment and welfare. . . . But the enemies of the world (the English) will not have it so. We are compelled, in spite of ourselves, to aspire to greater things. Wisdom and policy both demand that we should accomplish the commands of destiny and advance whither we are led by the inevitable sequence of events. Only then will the millions of pigmies, who refuse to realize that the estimate of present events is to be sought not in the newspapers of a past century but in universal

[8] Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre*, I.

history, only then will they submit and follow our command. . . . I here lay bare my soul before Your Majesty. Tilsit will determine the fate of the world." [9]

No, even here he does not "lay bare his soul"; had he done so, Alexander might, possibly, have recoiled from him in horror.

In conjunction with the campaign against India, he plans one against Egypt in order to raise the three continents, Europe, Asia and Africa, against England. "Fleets and flotillas will appear simultaneously at the entrance to the French harbours in the North Sea and the Atlantic, and produce naval demonstrations; Ireland, too, will revolt, stirred up by French agents; light cruisers will penetrate into every sea, spreading terror into all enemy waters. Shattered by all these blows and exhausted by her efforts to palliate them, England, panic-stricken, will stagger in the midst of this "world tornado, *tourbillon du monde*," and, rendered powerless, will cease to oppose the destinies of a regenerated France, and acknowledge her to be victorious. Then lasting peace will emerge out of this tremendous upheaval." [10]

The "world tornado" is the "world revolution" accomplished by Napoleon, the "Robespierre on horseback"; while the "lasting peace" is universal peace—the Kingdom of God, *adveniat regnum tuum* according to the Gospel, or the "paradise on earth," the "Golden Age," *redeunt Saturnia regna*, according to Virgil's Messianic prophecy.

"The Emperor is mad, stark mad. He will make short work of us all, and all this will end in a terrible

[9] Vandal, I.
[10] Vandal, I.

catastrophe," exclaimed the Minister of Marine, Decrès.[11] Feelings akin to this must probably have animated Alexander I on reading Napoleon's letter, adding to the European's political terror the peculiar mystical awe of the Russian as formulated in the idea of "Napoleon the Anti-Christ."

"The thirst for world dominion forms part of his nature; it may be diverted or restrained, but not destroyed. My opinion with regard to Napoleon's secret intentions has never changed: his monstrous idea always was and continues to be the enslavement of the entire continent beneath the rule of one man." [12]

Is that really so? Has Napoleon actually "gone mad"? At all events, he is no more mad than the Revolution or its outcome—the present European civilization, which is but the congealed lava and extinct volcano of the Revolution. The duel with England for world supremacy and its weapon—the continental blockade, are a heritage of the Revolution. The idea of it was originated by the Committee of Public Safety already in 1795.[13]

Napoleon fully realized whom he was pitted against. His first wound was inflicted on him by an English bayonet at the siege of Toulon; his last—Waterloo and St. Helena—will also be dealt by England. This, however, does not prevent him from doing justice to the strength and greatness of his enemy. "Englishmen are of a better cast than Frenchmen. Were I in command of the English army, I should have traversed and con-

[11] Marmont, III.
[12] Taine, *Les Origines de la France contemporain*, IX.
[13] Vandal, II.

quered the whole world. . . . Had I, in 1815, been the chosen not of the French but of the English nation, I might have lost ten Waterloos without losing a single vote in Parliament or a single soldier in the army, and in the end have won the game." [14]

Yet the whole crux of the matter lay in the fact that England as a national entity would never have chosen him. He could only be the chosen of France, which is an universal entity.

"England expects every man to do his duty"; France trusts every man to die for his honour. Which is the greater of the two: duty or honour? Duty towards the fatherland, or honour towards the world? What is best for a nation—to sacrifice the world for a nation, or to sacrifice self for the world; to remain isolated, or come out into the world? This enigma is still in process of solution and still remains unsolved within the historically universal destinies of nations. In that sense the duel betwen England and France is still unsettled—as a duel between a national and an universal being.

England, the Island, is self-centred, self-bound and self-sufficient, Revolutionary first and later imperial France, a-thirst for universalism, is constantly overstepping her boundaries and coming out of herself. Perhaps none have so great a love of liberty as Englishmen, but only for themselves. England is the most liberal and conservative and the least revolutionary of all the European countries. Having accomplished betimes her own national revolution, she is least of all concerned with

[14] Gourgaud, I.

the World Revolution. "I am the Revolution," says Napoleon, and again accentuating the revolutionary spirit in himself: "The Empire is Revolution." "I am Reaction. England is Reaction." Every Englishman from the First Lord of the Admiralty to the least clerk in the City could proclaim this before the face of the French World Revolution.

It all appears as a huge misunderstanding. England becomes the "centre of liberty," its bulwark against Napoleon, the enslaver. "Fortunately the nations were saved by a barrier, which Bonaparte was unable to overcome by force of arms: a channel, several kilometres wide, proved the guardian of our civilization." [15] That such a statement received credence in the salon of Madame de Rémusat is not surprising; the greater marvel is that it was and apparently still is credited by the world at large.

Napoleon, "a monstrous despot," is behind France; who, then, is behind England? Lord Pitt, Parliament, the City, *business*, perhaps also knavery—Plutocracy.* Which is the greater menace: one supreme despot, "a Robespierre on horseback," or a million smaller knaves?

Everything is mixed up, as if the devil himself had shuffled the cards in this foul game. France—the Revolution stands out for reaction; England, the Reaction—has become Revolution; liberty has donned the guise of slavery, and slavery that of liberty; the past has become the future, and the future—past. As if, in very truth, all the dry land had hurled itself into the ocean, and both were engulfed in a new world flood. Chaos

[15] Rémusat, III.

* A play of words: "plut" in Russian meaning "knave."

once more predominates—so far, only in men's minds; actually everything remains or wants to remain as it was. But this cannot be. Intellectual chaos is bound to breed its active counterpart. Its first offspring—the World War—we have already witnessed; we may live to see the second—World Revolution. It is the advent of such a chaos that Napoleon is combating against, and by it he is vanquished.

"The sense of measure," *mezzo termini* of which that national being, Bonaparte, had such absolute possession, seems to be lost by Napoleon—the universal being. This is as it should be: the measure of national being is not the same as of universalism. The one is contained within our familiar tri-dimensional Euclid's geometry, whereas in the other we are confronted with a "four-dimensional" geometry of the unknown. It may be that what to us appears as "immeasurableness" and "madness" is but this new measure of Napoleon. "The 'pear' of universalism is not yet ripe," this is what the *premature* pan-man failed to realize or realized too late.[16]

It would likewise be useful to remind ourselves that in a lunatic asylum a sane man at times not only passes off as a lunatic, but frequently does actually border on insanity. Napoleon was fully conscious of this proximity: "One cannot lie upon the bed of kings and not be affected by their insanity. I, too, have caught the disease." [17]

Yet, strange to say, the main cause of his downfall was not his "madness," but *simplicity*. He attached too

[16] Dostoievsky's address on Pushkin.
[17] Lacour-Gayet.

great a faith to the words uttered by Alexander at Tilsit: "I detest the English as much as you do." The Corsican was the dupe of "the astute and wily Byzantine," who promised all and fulfilled nothing, and proved according to the words of the prophet, "a broken reed which enters the hand of him who leaneth upon it." Soft and caressing, he was as the moss covering the Russian marshes: whoever steps upon it, is drawn in.

"My intention was by friendly pressure to force Russia back into Asia," said Napoleon: "I offered her Constantinople," minus the Straits, i.e., the lock without the key.[18] "The key is too precious: it alone is worth an empire; whoever owns it—rules the world." [19] Tilsit came to naught because of the Straits.

In the autumn of 1808, the two Emperors met again at Erfurt, when Talma at the gala performance uttered the verse of Voltaire's Oedipus:

"L'amitié d'un grand homme est un bienfait des dieux."

Alexander and Napoleon in the Imperial box embraced one another. The fervour of the Tilsit days was gone: much water had flowed under the bridges of the Seine and Nyeman since that meeting on the ferry. There is a fissure in the Tilsit china. It is being riveted at Erfurt, but however lightly it is touched, the brittle vessel reverberates on a discordant and ominous key: *"Eighteen Hundred and Twelve!"*

[18] Vandal, I.
[19] Lacour-Gayet.

II

THE RISING OF THE NATIONS

1809

"All Europe will rise against him. The closer he binds peoples in chains, the more terrific will be their upheaval. Believe me, if only we can hold out longer, France will succumb, bled white by her own triumphs." [1]

Thus in 1806 after Jena spoke General Blücher, the future victor of Waterloo. The upheaval came sooner than Blücher apparently expected.

In order to close the ring of the European blockade from Gibraltar to the Vistula, Spain had to be included in the system. Encouraged by General Junot's rapid and facile occupation of Portugal in 1807, the Emperor imagined the conquest of the whole peninsula would be as easy. The idea that because he had come into the French half of the Bourbon heritage he had a right to the Spanish half, was inspired in him by his Mephistopheles—Talleyrand.

Under pretext of reinforcing General Junot in Portugal, an army corps commanded by Murat penetrates into Spain in March 1808, and enters the Escurial, where matters have attained a climax particularly tempting to French appetites.

[1] Bourrienne, IV.

Ferdinand, Prince of Asturias and heir to the Spanish throne, detests the Prime Minister Godoi, "the Prince of Peace," a man of obscure lineage, who by becoming the favourite of the queen dominates the senile Charles IV, ruins the country and reflects dishonour on the Royal house. Godoi becomes the cause of a quarrel between parents and son, which leads to actual civil war. A rebellion in favour of the Crown Prince breaks out in Aranjuez; he is proclaimed king under the title of Ferdinand VII; the Prince of Peace narrowly escaping assassination is imprisoned, and the aged king abdicates in favour of his son.

Napoleon, to keep in touch with Spanish affairs, arrives on the 15th April at the castle of Marrac near Bayonne, whither the royal family of Spain, son, father, mother and lover, are invited. They eagerly accept the summons in the hope that the Emperor will act as their arbiter. A fresh insurrection, however, breaks out on the 2nd May in Madrid against the French army of occupation, ruthlessly quelled by Murat: nearly fifteen thousand rebels are massacred by his Mamelukes.

Simultaneously at Bayonne Napoleon deprives Ferdinand of the crown on the pretext that the Madrid rebellion was engineered by his followers, and offers to reinstate the old king. The latter declines. This exactly tallies with Napoleon's aims.

Ferdinand is imprisoned in Valencia, Charles in Compiègne. The throne of Spain is vacant. The Emperor places upon it his brother Joseph and makes his brother-in-law Joachim Murat, king of Naples. "He doffed the crown from off one man's head, thrust it upon another's, and both kings turned about and marched off

each his own way, like two recruits exchanging caps," [2] says Chateaubriand.

"It was the most outrageous rape of a crown ever known in modern history," is General Marbot's indignant comment: "To offer himself as mediator between father and son in order to lure them into a trap and there rob them, was a base felony branded as such by history and which Providence did not tarry to punish." [3] This outburst of indignation reveals Marbot's noble sentiments as a man and inferior capacities as a politician: alas, modern history abounds in multitudes of heinous crimes recompensed by men and unpunished by Providence, at least on earth.

Mephistopheles—Talleyrand, the "rubbish in a silk bag" as Napoleon called him to his face, is jubilant: he has succeeded in casting a noose round the Emperor's neck. The man of boundless intelligence has become entangled in a boundlessly foolish mesh, and will henceforward wallow up to his ears in mire and blood. Napoleon will rule the world, but himself be ruled by Talleyrand.

The Emperor, however, censors himself with such severity, that one needs to be a Taine to kick him when he is down. "I confess, I have made a bad mess of this affair; its immorality was too blatant, the injustice too cynical and, because I failed, the whole attempt assumed a much too sinister aspect . . . which marred the magnitude and beneficent results of my scheme. This ill-

[2] Lacour-Gayet.
[3] Marbot, II.

fated war was my undoing. . . ." "This canker has eaten into me." [4]

The Bayonne "outrage" was followed by an outbreak of general revolt: the conflagration quenched with blood in the streets of Madrid spread throughout Spain. The whole country becomes covered by a network of guerilla semi-bandit, semi-heroic organizations. The poignard and the bullet meet the French soldier at every turn. "The Spaniards are easy to defeat, but impossible to subdue, because no regular warfare is possible against them." The spirit of the nation—this is the foe, elusive because invisible but withal omnipresent. "Such a war, by becoming protracted, demoralizes an army but steels a nation." [5]

Day and night, a hundred thousand fanatical monks preach a holy war to "twelve millions of proud, vermin-covered beggars." [6]

"There exist two natures in Napoleon: the human and the diabolical." [7] "From whom is he issued? From sin. Is it sin to kill a Frenchman? No! Paradise is the reward for anyone who kills these heretic dogs." Such is the *Patriotic Catechism* of the Spanish monks.

The Spaniards will have none of Napoleon's benefactions; neither King Joseph, nor Jean-Jacques Rousseau, nor "the Rights of Man and of the citizen"; neither the Code, nor even the "Golden Age" with its army of occupation. They prefer to live according to ancient customs, "proud and vermin-covered." A wild mountain track in the Sierra-Morrena, swept by the cold breath

[4] Lacour-Gayet.
[5] Thiébault, IV.
[6] Léon Bloy.
[7] Fournier.

of the eternal snows and redolent with the smell of thyme and goat's manure, means more to them than the Champs Elysées with its triumphal arch.

Poor Joseph, that royal puppet, sheds tears of fear and humiliation: "There is not a single Spaniard I could rely upon. My enemy is a people of twelve million, brave and reduced to desperation." [8]

The valiant General Dupont is ordered to occupy the south of Spain. On the 22nd July, 1808, surrounded and cut off by the enemy in the Baylen gorge in the Sierra-Morrena near Cordova, he is compelled to capitulate with his army of eighteen thousand men. "His men mostly recruits, mere lads, worn out by eight hours' fighting after a forced march of fifteen hours in the burning heat of Andalusia, are unable to stand on their feet, much less fight"; [9] and gently, like ripe corn beneath the scythe, they drop to earth, to await death or captivity. Under the circumstances the god of war himself would have been forced to capitulate. Nevertheless, Baylen resounded throughout Spain, France and all Europe like a ringing slap across the face of the Great Army, the face of the Emperor himself. Baylen is the retribution for Bayonne.

"Our honour is lost—that is irretrievable; seared honour cannot be healed!" murmurs Napoleon paling at the news as if about to swoon.[10] And speaking of Baylen in the Council of State, he weeps.

The magic spell of his victories is broken: Napoleon can be defeated.

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[8] Lacour-Gayet.
[9] Marbot, II.
[10] Ségur, III.

Madrid is evacuated; Joseph ignominiously turned out. An English army under the command of General Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington and hero of Waterloo, has landed at Lisbon and is marching on Salamanca and Valladolid, learning the while how to defeat the French.

In the autumn of 1808, Napoleon, at the head of an army of two hundred and fifty thousand men, hurls himself against Burgos and Madrid, reinstates Joseph and in little over a month reoccupies the northern part of the peninsula.

The Spaniards flee before him almost without fighting, but . . . "though easily defeated, they are impossible to subdue." With every step Napoleon sinks deeper into this sanguinary and bottomless morass.

Then suddenly, in the middle of the campaign, on the 18th January, 1809, he gallops off to Paris. He leaves on the peninsula an army of three hundred thousand, "but what can it avail against twelve millions possessed of the very devil!" [11] He gallops off to Paris because he has learnt of the conspiracy engineered by the Minister for Foreign Affairs Talleyrand and the Minister of Police Fouché, on the emergency of his, Napoleon's, death in Spain. Would he had executed them instead of the innocent d'Enghien and rid the world of these twain vipers! But he forgives them, as he easily does all his worst enemies, perhaps out of sheer contempt. The Emperor's brother-in-law Murat, the king of Naples, is also involved in the plot and so is his spouse, "Lady Macbeth"—Caroline Murat.[12]

[11] Ségur, III.
[12] Pasquier, I.

Austria, Napoleon likewise learns, has declared war on France. He is like a man who with one foot sunk in a quagmire, is forced to defend himself against the attacks of an antagonist. The morass is Spain, and the antagonists—Austria, England, all Europe.

The short Austrian campaign is brilliant, but with the sinister radiance of a sunset amid storm-clouds.

Essling, on the 21-22nd May 1809, is almost a defeat; Wagram, on the 5-6th July—not quite a victory. The battle is won, the enemy retreating, "but strangely enough we did not capture one prisoner nor a single enemy colour," recalls one of the participators in the battle.[13] This last victory, the fruit of too strenuous efforts, strained his forces to the utmost. Napoleon does not even pursue the retreating enemy: the wounded lion still snarls and keeps the attacking hounds at bay, but has no longer the strength to overtake and tear them to pieces. It may be at Wagram he became conscious for the first time that he was now at war not only against kings but peoples.

On the 13th October, 1809, soon after Wagram, Napoleon held a review at Schönbrunn near Vienna. A young man of eighteen, almost a boy, "with a pale, delicate, girlish face," Friedrich Staps by name, the son of a Protestant pastor from Naumburg, penetrates into the courtyard, is seized by the guard and searched. A large kitchen knife clumsily wrapped up in paper protrudes from his pocket. With this knife he intended to stab Napoleon, to whom he confessed at once when brought into his presence.

[13] Marmont, III.

"Why did you want to kill me?"

"Because you have ruined my country. . . ."

"If you ask my forgiveness, I will grant you your life."

"I do not want your forgiveness, and my only regret is that I failed to kill you."

"Damn it! A crime is nothing to you apparently?"

"To kill you would be a duty, not a crime."

"Well, and if I were to pardon you nevertheless, would you be grateful to me?"

"No, I would kill you all the same."

"Napoleon was dumbfounded," writes an eye-witness. "These are the fruits of the teaching of the Illuminates, who have infested the whole of Germany! There is nothing to be done with them; sects cannot be destroyed by guns," the Emperor remarked as Staps was being led away. "Find out and report to me on his behaviour at death," he added.

Staps died like a hero. As he stood confronting the firing party, he cried out aloud: "Liberty for ever! Long live Germany!" and fell dead.

It was long before Napoleon could forget him. "I cannot get this unfortunate youth out of my head. . . . I am at a loss what to think of him. . . . This is beyond me!" [14]

Nay, not "beyond": he knows—remembers that this eighteen-year-old lad, "pale and delicate, with a face like a girl's,"—the face of an ancient hero or of a Christian martyr, this avenging cherubim of liberty, is

[14] Rapp. Bourrienne, IV. Constant, III. D. Merezhkovsky: *Napoleon the Man*, ch. "The Man from Atlantis." Here is another repetition, inevitable because the same event is dealt with from the viewpoint of time, not personality.

his own double—Bonaparte, the Jacobin of '93: "Were my father to become a tyrant, I would stab him with my own hand."

The truth that he was now no longer warring against kings but nations faced him even more clearly at Stap's trial than on the field of Wagram. Immediately after the attempt on his life, the Emperor expedites peace negotiations with Austria. "I want to put an end to this!" he said.[15] But this he will never do.

"Your Majesty may be sure that in the event of our defeat, both Russians and Germans will rise in their multitudes to throw off our yoke; it will be a crusade; we shall be forsaken by all our allies, whose subjects will force them to join our enemies," General Rapp told the Emperor in 1806, soon after Jena. "The Emperor did not know Germans, when he compared them to lap-dogs who bark but do not bite; he learnt later what they were capable of." [16]

That same year, after a bookseller of Nuremberg named Palm was shot by court-martial for circulating a pamphlet entitled: "Germany in her Abject Humiliation," [17] a storm of indignation and desperation swept the land. A national movement broke out in Prussia. Fichte edits his "Talks to the German People," Arndt —"The Catechism of the German Soldier," Kerner— "The Lyre and the Sword."

"The general unrest has reached a climax," Jerome, king of Westphalia, warns Napoleon: "The most insane schemes are acclaimed with enthusiasm, and Spain is

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[15] Ségur, III.
[16] Rapp.
[17] *Deutschland in seiner tiefen Erniedrigung.*

quoted as an example. If a war breaks out, all the countries between the Rhine and the Oder will be a-flame with revolt." [18] This is what Blücher meant when he said: "The closer he binds the peoples in chains, the more terrific will be their upheaval."

Not only the potentates, but all their subjects felt outraged at the partition of Europe between the members of the Bonaparte family: Joseph in Madrid, Jerome in Westphalia, Louis in Holland, Eliza in Tuscany, Joachim Murat, Caroline's husband—in Naples.

Napoleon cuts up Europe like a birthday cake and distributes slices among his brothers and sisters; the Imperial eagle feeds its fledglings on Europe as upon a carcase.

Yet he himself knows there will be an explosion. As he walks the earth, he feels it burning and throbbing like a volcano beneath his feet. What is he to do? Subdue the nations or renounce universalism? "It was the Gordian knot, and I cut it." [19] He attempted to cut the knot of nations, a knot of flesh and blood, with the sword of illusory universalism, but only succeeded in drawing a running noose round his own neck.

"I wished harm to no one; but when my great political chariot thunders past—make way for it, and woe to those who fall under its wheels!" [20]

He was crushed beneath them himself.

[18] Lacour-Gayet.
[19] *Ibid.*
[20] *Ibid.*

III

THE DYNASTY

1810-1811

Marie-Louise, the daughter of the Emperor of Austria, fell as booty to the victor of Wagram.

To found a dynasty, Napoleon needs an heir and Josephine is childless. "If I had the misfortune to lose Josephine I might, perhaps, for reasons of state be induced to marry again; but in that case I would merely marry a womb, *j'épouserai un ventre*, and Josephine would have remained the only mate of my life," he was wont to say.[1] So he finds his object in Marie-Louise: her mother had had thirteen children, her grandmother seventeen, and her great-grandmother—twenty-six.

The divorce and Josephine's "voluntary" renunciation were officially announced on the 25th December, 1809. This was obtained at the price of many tears, hysterics and fainting fits on her part. He too weeps; as a matter of fact, tears come easily to him over trivial or mediocre disappointments, over serious ones—never. He is sincerely attached to Josephine: however strange it may seem, Napoleon is a creature of habits, of "old slippers," Josephine for him is also an "old slipper," soft and comfortable and not too tight.

[1] Masson, *Joséphine repudiée.*

In addition to the Habsburg fecundity Marie-Louise attracts him by her Bourbon lineage; in having her for wife he will be able to call Louis XVI "uncle," and Marie-Antoinette "aunt." The soldier of the Revolution has "lowered" himself first to an "Emperor" and then to "an heir of the Habsburgs." "Ah, here is the real Austrian lip!" he would exclaim admiringly on comparing her portrait with the Habsburg medals.[2]

Napoleon has forgotten Bonaparte: "I have no son, nor do I need one. The family spirit is alien to me. At Marengo my greatest fear was that were I killed, one of my brothers would succeed me." "My sole heir is the French people. It is my son, I worked for him alone." [3]

Having once "lowered" himself, he also repudiates himself and his individuality for the sake of the race; no longer content to remain unique, he seeks a second Napoleon in a Habsburg.

When in 1814 Marie-Louise arrived at Rambouillet with her infant son, Francis II was struck by the king of Rome's resemblance to Joseph II: "Here is a real Habsburg!" [4]

The groom of forty endeavours to appear young before the bride of eighteen: he orders himself smart tight-fitting clothes and tight shoes, which he cannot bear; learns to waltz, although it makes him giddy.[5] He longs for his bride as a small boy for some new plaything.

He hastens to meet her at Compiègne, driving at night along muddy roads, precipitates himself into her coach

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[2] Masson, *Napoléon et les femmes.*
[3] Roederer.
[4] Masson, *Napoléon et son fils.*
[5] Constant, III.

and there takes possession of her in rude, soldierly fashion.[6]

She has milk-white skin, china-blue eyes, a rosy slightly pock-marked face, stiff wooden manners, the bust of a wet nurse and the innocence of a child of ten. When he kisses her, she wipes her lips with a handkerchief. "Why, Louise, am I repellent to you?" "No, it is just a habit of mine; I do the same when the King of Rome kisses me."

The husband likes warmth, the wife prefers the cold. "Sleep with me, Louise." "No, your room is too hot." [7]

"I am not a bit afraid of him, but I am beginning to think he is afraid of me," she tells Metternich three months after her marriage.

He imagines that she loves him. After his abdication in 1814, she writes that she will never abandon him and that "no human power can ever separate them." And he believes her, or pretends he does. "You do not know the Empress: she is a very strong-minded woman!" he assures his followers.[8] "She is more intelligent and has greater political tact than all my brothers." [9]

He expects her to join him in his exile at Elba because "she loves the man in him more than the Emperor." The ceiling in the palace at Elba is by his order decorated with a fresco depicting two doves joined together by a silken cord in such a manner that the knot tightens, the further they fly apart." [10]

At St. Helena, a week before his death, he bequeathes

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[6] Abrantès, III.
[7] Constant, III.
[8] Macdonald.
[9] Roederer.
[10] Masson, *Napoléon et les femmes.*

her his heart: "You are to place it in alcohol and take it to Parma to my dear Marie-Louise; tell her I love her dearly and have never ceased loving her. Tell her all you were witness to here, and how I lived and died." At the time she was already the mistress of Baron Neipperg, an Austrian diplomat and obscure adventurer, Napoleon's worst enemy and one who had spied on him for many years.[11]

"I beg my beloved consort, Marie-Louise, to take care of my son," wrote the Emperor in his testament.[12] It was well for him that he died in ignorance of the nature of her care.

They were married on the 2nd April, 1810. The ceremony was performed by the same Cardinal Fesch who had married Napoleon and Josephine. Their son, the King of Rome, was born on the 20th March, 1811. The phantom dynasty is founded; the chasm concealed in flowers. Apparently he does not deceive himself, however: "The marriage with Marie-Louise was my ruin. . . . I stepped upon a chasm concealed in flowers." [13]

Of the millstones that he hung round his neck, Spain was the first, the dynasty the second, and the Pope—the third.

"The Pope is lord over the spirit, and myself only over matter." "Priests appropriate men's souls, and leave me only dead bodies." [14] He will have none of

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[11] *Ibid.*
[12] *Mémorial,* IV.
[13] *Mémorial,* II.
[14] Bloy.

that; he wishes to revive the dead bodies, to join the spirit and matter. He proclaims there are not two vicars of Christ—the Pope and the Caesar, but only one—Caesar. "God has appointed the Emperor to be his vicar and image on earth." [15]

"I hoped to dominate the Pope, and then how great would be my influence and power throughout the world!" [16] "I should have ruled the spiritual world as easily as I did the political." [17] "I would have exalted the Pope and surrounded him with such splendour and veneration as would make him forget the loss of his temporal power. I would have made an idol of him. His residence would have been close to mine; Paris would become the capital of the Christian world; I would hold my conclaves like Constantine and Charlemagne." [18]

By a decree dated Schönbrunn May 1809, shortly after Essling the Emperor deprives the Pope of the Papal States, *i.e.*, of temporal power. The Pope excommunicates the Emperor. "No more clemency. The Pope is a frenzied fool who ought to be shut up," Napoleon writes to Murat. At the head of an armed body of men, the latter forces his way into the Quirinal, arrests the Pope and hustles the sick and feeble old man away first to Tuscany, then Grenoble and finally to Savona on the Genoese Riviera.

The Emperor orders all the cardinals and the papal chancellery to be transferred to Paris; hither he also intends to bring the Pope so as to have him under complete

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[15] Rémusat, III.
[16] *Mémorial*, III.
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] *Ibid.*

control. Subsequently he will transfer the Pope and imprison him at Fontainebleau, where he will force him to sign his abdication of temporal power; which, however, the Pope will repudiate very soon. At Fontainebleau the Pope is placed under the custody of a jailer, an officer of the gendarmerie.[19]

From 1810, he is deprived of his secretary, all his papers, even of pen and ink. Yet he remains firm: "It is a matter of conscience, and here we refuse to compromise, were even our skin torn off our body!" [20]

Thus does Napoleon himself lay the axe to the root of the tree he sits on—his sacred coronation; and brandishes an iron sword against a phantom.[21]

"Even in Protestant countries his treatment of the Pope arouses widespread indignation." [22]

"I have made a bad mess of the whole affair," he might well say that of his duel with Rome, as he did of the war with Spain. "Because I failed, all this assumes a much more sinister aspect. . . . The whole enterprise appears in all its hideous nakedness." "I raised my arm too high, I wanted to act as if I were Providence." [23]

Since the court physician Corvisart in the early years of the Empire cured him of the itches, contracted at Toulon, the Emperor began to put on flesh. Together with his slenderness he lost that sense of divine buoyancy which he mentioned when speaking of his youth: "It was

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[19] Ségur, III.
[20] Bloy.
[21] D. Merezhkovsky: *Napoleon the Man.* Ch. "The Lord of the World."
[22] Bourrienne, IV.
[23] Bloy.

as if I were being lifted into the air." Towards the approach of forty he puts on flesh, becomes heavy and obese. Contrary to nature, his soul in his sick body is sound, and sick when his body is in health. His complexion from sallow turns to a dead white, cold as marble. His face, slightly puffed, acquires a feminine softness, something almost of the "old wife" look. A provincial footman, catching sight of the Emperor in his velvet toque adorned with ostrich plumes as he drove in a state coach beside the Empress, mistook him for "an old governess" of Marie-Louise. The expression of Ossian-like melancholy upon his face now gave way to one of stony, heavy boredom—"lethargic sleep."

"I pity you, it is your duty to amuse the un-amusable, *l'inamusable*," says Talleyrand to de Rémusat, the master of ceremonies.

The Emperor himself expresses surprise at the dulness of the court festivals. "That is because mirth cannot be summoned by a tattoo," explains Talleyrand.[24]

The sovereign being bored, so are his subjects. Even victories are beginning to pall, since the war seems endless. "Here there is widespread melancholy and dissatisfaction. There is neither admiration nor so much as amazement over our triumphs: one is surfeited with miracles," [25] says a contemporary woman writer in a private letter.

The revolutionary dictator becomes an autocratic despot.

By a decree dated March, 1810, the prisons are re-

[24] Lacour-Gayet.
[25] Rémusat, III.

opened for political delinquents, "thereby in a sense abolishing the first act of the Revolution—the destruction of the Bastille." [26] The *lycées* and schools are transformed into barracks, where the Muses parade to the sound of drums, as do also the ladies at court balls. Freedom of the press is no more. The number of newspapers from seventy-three has dwindled to four; their contents are supplied by the office of public opinion, *bureau de l'esprit public*, and editors appointed by the Prefect of Police. "The printing press is an arsenal, it cannot be common property. Books should only be published by those who enjoy the confidence of the government." [27] "Newspapers should be limited to advertisements," [28] so the Emperor soliloquizes. "It would be a good thing to proscribe "Tartuffe." [29]

"Ideas are the worst enemies of kings." [30] Madame de Staël that perfectly innocently liberal woman—is persecuted. "The reign of mischief-makers is over. I desire to be obeyed; the powers that be must be respected, as they are ordained of God." [31] For a random allusion to Nero and Tacitus, the Emperor threatens "to hack Chateau briand with swords on the steps of the Tuileries."

The atmosphere is close and heavy with boredom. He is conscious of it himself: "When I die, the whole world will say: *ouf*!" [32]

"God created Bonaparte and rested," a departmental

[26] Thibaudeau.
[27] Lacour-Gayet.
[28] J. Berbaut.
[29] *Mémorial,*
[30] J. Bertaut.
[31] Bourrienne, IV.
[32] Rémusat. I.

mayor says to him in a harangue of welcome. "He had better have rested sooner!" a voice mutters in the crowd.[33]

The city of Paris proposes an inscription for the Imperial throne: "*Ego sum qui sum.*" "I forbid you to compare me with the Deity," the Emperor rebukes them—disgusted with such shameless adulation.[34]

He is like the statue of the *Commandore* in Don Juan: the earth trembles beneath his tread. "All from the last footman to the Prime Minister, trembled at his approach." [35]

Did he realize all he was doing, or is he, the eagle-eyed, suddenly gone blind, and the infinitely wise become insane? Yes, he knew all. He was conscious that he was working his own ruin and was powerless to prevent it; that he was unable to prevent being "consumed," as a "sacrifice" unto death. "All my life long I sacrificed everything: happiness, fortune, peace, my all—to Destiny." [36]

He could no more help this sacrifice than the evening sun can stay its westward course.

"The massive club, which he alone could lift, descended upon his own head." [37] He knew that so it would be and, strange to say, *appeared to wish it so.*

"By committing a political suicide, he destroyed himself," remarked a contemporary.[38] Suicide—self-immo-

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[33] Bourrienne, III.
[34] Lacour-Gayet.
[35] Constant, I.
[36] Masson, *Le sacre de Napoléon.*
[37] Rémusat, I.
[38] Marmont, V.

lation: "And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent the lion as he would have rent a kid." He rent himself in order that "out of the eater should come forth meat, and out of the strong come forth sweetness."

At the beginning of the war with Spain in 1808 he hangs round his neck a wallet with poison, which he wears until the very end:[39] Nevertheless he will not poison himself, for poison has entered him already. The Imperial purple is to him like the shirt of Nessus: it clings to his flesh and stings to the marrow; nor will he extricate himself from it, until he ascends the sacrificial pyre: fate ordains he should be consumed upon it, as the sun burns itself out in the fires of the West.

"Provided it lasts! *Pourvou que ça doure, pourvou que ça doure*!" murmurs *maman* Letizia, shaking her head like a prophetic Parca.[40]

"She always had a certainty that everything would collapse." [41] Her son perhaps also knew, and hearing the call of Destiny responded to it as a child follows its mother's voice.

He knew that his hour was nigh: *Eighteen Hundred and Twelve.*

[39] Constant, III.
[40] Chuquet, I.
[41] Stendhal.

IV

MOSCOW

1812

"He would lie on the sofa for hours plunged in meditation, then suddenly start up with the cry: 'Who is calling me?' and pace the room murmuring to himself: 'No, it is too soon . . . all is not ready yet. . . . It must be put off for another three years or so. . . .'" [1] Yet all the time he knew that nothing would be postponed, and knew whose voice it was that called him—the voice of Destiny.

"I did not wish to give battle, neither did Alexander, but being once in presence, circumstances urged us on, and fate accomplished the rest." [2]

The Russian campaign was the inevitable sequence of the continental blockade, the duel between France and England. "Having annihilated Austria and Prussia, these natural ramparts of the European West, Napoleon found himself face to face with the Russian East." [3]

By the autumn of 1810 the blockade is beginning to take effect: there are a series of bankruptcies in the City of London; England's internal situation is becoming

[1] Ségur, IV.
[2] *Mémorial*, IV.
[3] Ségur, IV.

desperate; the economic crisis brings her to the verge of a social revolution. It appears to Napoleon that he has attained his object: England is about to collapse; there remains but to deal the final blow—to close the Baltic ports, the last chink through which English goods penetrate into Europe. "The key to peace or war is in Russia's hands," says Napoleon and proposes to Alexander the confiscation in Baltic waters not only of English but of all neutral shipping carrying English goods. "Never has England's position been so desperate. . . . We possess authentic knowledge of her will for peace. . . . If Russia joins France, all England will cry out for 'peace,' and the English government will be forced to sue for it." [4]

Alexander, however, does not in the least wish England to collapse: in his opinion she is the last defence against the "final enslavement of the nations under the rule of one man." Simultaneously, Napoleon learns that 1,200 neutral ships have unloaded cargo in Russian ports and realizes that Russia would never join in the blockade.

Since January, 1811, Alexander has been secretly mobilizing two hundred and forty thousand men upon his Western frontiers. He is flagrantly deceiving Napoleon by preparing to strike a sudden blow at him; and would have done so, had Poland consented.

But Napoleon forestalls Alexander: by the spring of 1811, he assembles in Germany an army of dimensions unheard-of in those days—six hundred thousand men, uniting two-thirds of Europe's fighting manhood, girt

[4] Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre.*

with iron discipline, organized and set in motion by the will of a single man. He determines to declare war on Russia in 1812.

"Soldiers!" so runs the Manifesto to the Great Army: "The war is at hand. . . . Russia is being drawn on by Destiny; she must accomplish her fate. . . . Let us cross the Nyeman!" [5]

They approach the Nyeman on the 22d June, 1812. Nothing has changed since the days of Tilsit, five years ago:

> The languid breath of drowsy noon,
> The river's lazy flow,
> The languid trail of melting clouds
> Across a molten sky.
> As if asleep, all nature lies
> Wrapped in a misty heat.

Now, as then, how sultry it is on the sandy shallows. . . . The air is redolent with the smell of sun-warmed water, fish, fragrant wild strawberries and the pungent breath of the pine forests beyond. . . . How sultry it is; surely, a storm is brewing.

The other bank is deserted. Where, then, are the Russians?

Several scouts row across the river at dusk—and climb up the bank. A horseman, a Russian officer from a Cossack patrol, rides out of the wood. He shouts: "Who are you?" "Frenchmen!" "What's your business?" "Don't you know? To fight, seize Vilna, Poland, Russia!" Without answering the rider veers his mount and gallops off among the trees. Three shots rang out after him and

[5] Ségur, IV.

echoed sharply through the wood, and once more there is silence.

The French army crossed the Nyeman in three columns by three pontoon bridges. The Russians did not prevent them. Everybody rejoiced at this except the Emperor. As he stood on the further bank watching the movements of the troops, he would often turn and gaze intently into the distance as if expectant. Suddenly he mounts his charger, and alone, without an escort, gallops off into the forest. He rides a mile, two, three, not a soul to be seen. He halts, gazes round, listens: silence, a boundless void —endless mystery—Russia. "Who calls me?" . . . With a cry, he gallops back to the Nyeman.

The army advanced into Russia across Lithuania: Kovno, Vilna, Vitebsk, nowhere encountering the enemy and penetrating ever further and deeper into silence and boundless void. It was as if they were falling, falling into some chasm or drowning in deep waters, going like a stone to the bottom. Terror gripped the men. This was no longer war, but something unknown in their experience. Man can fight against his fellow man or against nature, but how fight the immaterial and intangible—Space?

Not for nothing was a storm brewing in the sultry heat; it broke out in a deluge of rain, and suddenly the intense heat was changed to cold; July merged into October.

Ten thousand horses perished from cold and lack of fodder; the roads were strewn with their decaying carcasses and the very air made putrid. Owing to deep mud the army food supplies could not be brought up in time.

Famine set in with its inevitable accompaniment of dysentery and malignant fever. Men died like flies or deserted the colours. And yet this was but the beginning —they had not even crossed Lithuania.

"I know that the army is in a terrible condition," says Napoleon. "From Vilna one-half of it were laggards, now they amount to two-thirds. There is no time to lose: we must wrest peace from the Russians; we shall find it in Moscow. Besides, the army's advance cannot now be stopped; its *morale* is only being maintained by motion. An advance is alone possible, to stand still or retreat would mean disaster. It is an army created for an offensive, not for defence." [7]

Were even the army ready to halt, he himself no longer could. Space both terrifies and allures like a pit. He must advance, ever on and on, sink always deeper into the pit, penetrate ever further into the depth of that boundless silence, endless mystery—Russia.

July 28th—Vitebsk. The Emperor enters the chamber prepared for him, unbuckles his sword and lays it upon a table on which a map of Russia is spread out, saying: "I will stay here, wait and look round; give the army time to rest, organize Poland, muster my forces. The campaign of 1812 is over, and that of 1813 will settle the rest." "We shall reach Moscow in 1813 and in 1814— St. Petersburg. The Russian campaign will last three years." [8]

He says this for his followers; in his inner self he knows that he will not stop until he reaches Moscow, the bottom of the pit.

[7] Ségur, IV.
[8] Ségur, IV.

August 17th—Smolensk. The town is taken by assault and burnt down. The Russians—so the French thought—would not surrender the holy gates to Moscow with their ancient ikon of the Mother of God, without fighting. Yet they did surrender them; only Our Lady they carried away.

"If they gave up Smolensk they will surrender Moscow! Old wives, a people without a fatherland! We will make short work of them!" thunders Napoleon in a towering rage.[9] "Shall we? You try!" the grim faces of his marshals seem to answer silently.

A battle, at last, a battle! On the 5th September the French came in sight of the Russian army. It was occupying the fortified heights of Borodino, which covered the approaches to Moscow along the Mozhaïsk road.

A tremor shook the Great Army. The trust in the Leader's star revived again with the certainty that this, the first and last battle, would determine everything, and that it behoved them to conquer or die.

On the eve of the battle the Emperor spent a bad night. He had caught a chill, was feverish and suffered from a cold and cough. Always he felt unwell at the time of the autumnal equinox—that turning of the year's day to night and of the sun to winter, as if like the sun, he too lost strength and buoyancy.

He kept waking up, asking the time and sending to inquire whether the Russians were still there; in his sleep he raved that they had eluded him.

At five in the morning Marshal Ney reported that he was still in touch with the enemy and asked permission

[9] *Ibid.*

to attack. The Emperor got up, and shaking himself, as if to appear more alert, said: "We've got them at last! Come on, let us open the door to Moscow." [10]

He betook himself to the redoubt of Shevardino occupied by the French two days previously. There he waited for the sun to rise. "Behold, the sun of Austerlitz!" he exclaimed, but in such toneless accents that it were better to have said nothing. Besides, the sun rose from the Russian side, facing him, dazzling the French by its rays and exposing them as a target to the enemy.[11]

The combat opened. "It was the most sanguinary battle I ever fought," was Napoleon's own testimony. Not only the French and Russians, perhaps men in general, never fought so fiercely or with such equal valour as on that day, for they were each fighting for what they held most sacred: the French—for the universe and Man; the Russians—for the fatherland and something greater still; what that was, they knew not, but thought: "For Christ against Anti-Christ."

Napoleon for the first time in his life took no part in the battle. The redoubt of Shevardino on which he spent the day was situated in the French rear, and the field of battle was scarcely visible from it. The Emperor now sat on a camp stool, now paced up and down the redoubt. His countenance wore an expression of stony boredom—"lethargic sleep." He had longed for this battle to come, and now that it had commenced he scarcely watched it, scarcely lent an ear to reports of it. On hearing of the death of many of his brave followers he merely dismissed the news with a melancholy gesture, as if his

[10] Ségur, IV.
[11] *Ibid.*

thoughts were engrossed in something else. What in? Or was he merely ill? "I always had complete control over my body." [12] He now no longer had it. He aspired to conquer the world, but was unable to overcome a cold. There he sat, huddled up with bowed head, coughing, sneezing, blowing his nose. His pale puffed, womanish face again bore a likeness to "the old governess of Marie-Louise." Neither men nor gods will ever forgive him, that at such a time he, the Man, revealed himself to be a "milksop." Possibly, he no longer cared whether or not he were forgiven; in fact, he cared for nothing; no longer wanted to conquer the world, had realized the game was not worth the candle. "Victories may retain their glamour up to the age of thirty, and the horrors of war be glossed over by glory, but after that. . . ." [13] "Never had war seemed so abhorrent to me!"

He might have been victorious but lacked the will for it; repulsed Victory as a surfeited lover would his mistress; and this she will never forgive him.

By a cavalry charge Murat had completely routed Kutuzov's left wing; the heights of Semenovsk were captured by the cavalry of Latour-Maubourg, the trail was blazed for victory. But both marshals Ney and Murat, at the end of their resources, clamour for reinforcements. The Emperor vacillates—to give or not to give. The Russians take advantage of this. Bagration restores the broken front, and now it is no longer a question of how to culminate but of how to retain the victory. Once more the marshals beg and implore him to send

[12] Antommarchi, I.
[13] Ségur, III.

them reinforcements. The Emperor commands the Guard to attack but no sooner does it advance, than again he changes his mind: "No, I will wait and see. . . ." [14]

By noon, the right wing of the French has cut so deeply into the Russian front, that all its inner structure is laid bare; the whole rear, with fugitives, wounded, and baggage carts, lies open right up to the Mozhaïsk roadway. Only a ditch and copse lie between them and the French. One more effort to break through the Russian lines, and the issue of the battle, perhaps of the whole campaign, would be settled. "The Guard! the Guard!" the marshals implore and insist: "Let it but appear in the distance, and we shall settle the rest ourselves!"

"No, I do not see the issue clearly on my chessboard. . . . If there should be another battle, to-morrow, what troops will be left me?" answers the Emperor.[15]

"I don't know what to make of him!" groans Murat.[16] "What business has he to stay there in the rear?" Ney shouts in a rage: "If he wants to be the Emperor, and not the general, let him return to the Tuileries, and we'll fight in his stead!" [17]

When at last Napoleon did release the Guard, it was too late: the Russians had retired in perfect order abandoning only the field of battle to the French, on which the dead victors appeared more numerous than the living.

"Moscow! Moscow!" the soldiers shouted and clapped their hands with joy, when at two o'clock in the afternoon of the 14th September they sighted her golden

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[14] Ségur, IV.
[15] *Ibid.*
[16] *Ibid.*
[17] *Ibid.*

cupolas against the sky-line of the plain of Mozhaïsk. All their sufferings were forgotten. "Peace in Moscow," the Emperor had promised.

It may be, that they rejoiced at something greater than that, at something they lacked the power to express. The way to the East, where in days gone by the Lord had planted for Adam his garden of Paradise, lay through Moscow. And behold, a new Adam, the Man, is leading them into a new paradise—the realm of liberty, equality and fraternity. From Mount Thabor to Gibraltar, from the Pyramids to Moscow—such is Napoleon's cross on earth—the sign of the Apocalypse.

"The purpose of the age was accomplished—the Revolution consummated. . . . I became the ark of the Old and the New Covenant, the natural mediator between the two," thus at St. Helena he used to recall his dreams of yore.[18] "My ambition was of the highest and noblest kind that ever perhaps existed. . . . That of establishing and consecrating the Empire of reason and the full exercise and complete enjoyment of all human faculties!" [19] "A new horizon, new undertakings would have unfolded themselves, adopted to the well-being and prosperity of all." [20] This means: "Through Moscow—to Paradise!"

"At last!" he exclaimed as he stood on the Poklonnaia hill gazing at Moscow spread at his feet, and as if waking from a hideous dream.[21]

He awaits the Russian delegates to start peace nego-

[18] *Mémorial,* III.
[19] *Mémorial,* II.
[20] *Mémorial,* IV.
[21] *Mémorial,* V.

tiations, and suddenly learns that Moscow is deserted, refuses to believe it, and again waits. By nightfall, however, he rides into Moscow, and at once the hideous dream again seems to envelop him: the emptiness of a densely-populated and suddenly abandoned city, of the deserted streets and silent houses is more terrifying than that of the most desolate desert. A void, boundless stillness, endless mystery, Russia—Destiny.

That same night he learns that Moscow is burning. She will burn for five days. The French try to subdue the fire. How can they? It starts of itself in every quarter at once; Russian felons and robbers have been released from the prisons for the purpose. "Men with the faces of devils in the midst of the roaring flames—a veritable image of the inferno," writes an eye-witness. "What a people, what a people! They are Scythians!" Napoleon murmurs horror-struck.

The days are dry and bright, with a strong north-east wind. The town which, with the exception of the churches and palaces, is built of wood, is like "a rolling sea of flames." "It was the most magnificent and awful spectacle I ever beheld," Napoleon recalled at St. Helena.[22]

So this was Russia's answer to him: self-consummation!

As he stands watching the conflagration for hours from a window in the Kremlin Palace, does he see all his life —victories, fame, grandeur—vanish like vapour amid

[22] O'Meara, I.

volumes of fire and smoke? Does he envy Russia? Or recall his own temptation by fire: "to be consumed to lighten the darkness of his age"?

The Kremlin is besieged by the flames. It is so hot that when the Emperor stands by the window, the heat radiating from the glass burns his forehead.

He flees the Kremlin "across burning ground, beneath a burning sky, between burning walls," and barely escapes.[23]

After waiting at Petrovskoe-Razumovskoe for Moscow to burn herself out, the Emperor returns among her charred ruins. He is at a loss what to do; march on to St. Petersburg, or winter in Moscow; he tosses like a wild beast at bay. At last he dispatches an envoy to Alexander with the instruction "I desire peace, I need peace at all costs; only save my honour!" [24]

No answer comes from Alexander. There will be no peace.

On the 13th October comes the first snowfall, ushering in the fierce Russian winter: the inferno of fire gives place to one of ice.

On the 19th, the Great Army, no longer great but small—reduced to barely one-sixth, quits Moscow by the Kaluga road. The retreat has commenced.

On the 28th there was a sharp frost, and on the 8th November the French were overtaken on their way to Viazma by such a snowstorm that the men, completely unacquainted with the Russian winter, decided their last hour had come. It seemed as though the pitch-black

[23] O'Meara, V.
[24] *Ibid.*

heavens had hurled themselves against the white earth; and everything became mixed up in a swirling, howling, shrieking pandemonium. Choking and dizzy, blinded by the driving snow, the men stumbled and fell, to get up no more. Drifts of snow were swept over them like grave mounds. The whole trek of the army was marked by such graves like an endless burial ground.

Most terrifying of all were the long winter nights. The bivouacs in the open steppe afforded no shelter from the icy cutting wind. Dead horse flesh, roasted over the smouldering charcoals, and a thin soup of mildewed flour diluted in melted snow water was their only supper, after which the men would sink to sleep on the bare snow. Next morning the site of the bivouac would be marked by a ring of frozen corpses and thousands of dead horses strewn over the adjacent fields.

Still, better be frozen to death than fall into the hands of the cossacks and peasants. These did not kill outright, but amused themselves by torturing and mocking their prey, or would simply throw them naked into the snow. If the prisoners were too numerous, they would be driven with pikes like cattle, possibly to fresh and crueller torture.

One hundred thousand French left Moscow; three weeks later there remained only thirty-six thousand, and these resembled living corpses, or grotesque and frightful scarecrows clad in motley lice-infested tatters—officials' tail-coats, priests' vestments, women's dressing gowns and bonnets. All ranks had disappeared; superiors and subordinates were equals in the face of a common disaster. Packs of famished curs followed in their trail,

and clouds of crows circled overhead as if already flairing booty.

Not all, of course, were like this: there is still the Guard. The old whiskered grenadiers still slope arms in frostbitten hands and with feeble voices cheer, as on the parade-ground of the Tuileries: "*Vive l'Empereur!*" These men still achieve and will continue to achieve such miracles, as their grandchildren will find hard to believe.

In covering the retreat from Smolensk, Marshal Ney will not only hold his own for ten days with two thousand men against seventy thousand, but will beat them. Not France alone—the whole world will never forget such holy heroism.

What about Napoleon? Is he still the "milksop"? Ah, no! It is as if he had awaited this final collapse to arise from it in a glory exceeding that of all his triumphs.

How pale, how deadly pale his face is, pale as the dead white snow, but wondrous withal and awe-inspiring, like the face of Dionysos descended into hell. And those who are gazing upon it in hell-torment are buoyed once more with hope that he will save and lead them out of hell into paradise.

"Are you cold, *mon ami?*" he asks an old grenadier trudging beside him through the snow in forty degrees of frost. "No, Sire, when I look at you, I feel warm!" [25] Warmed by the sun in an icy inferno.

The men still retain their faith in him. Had they lost

[25] Lacour-Gayet.

it, would they not have killed him a thousand times over, as he walked beside them in the snow, stick in hand? Yet they do not kill him, but die for him still believing—these old atheist *sans-culottes*—that "to-day they shall be with him in Paradise." Perhaps he, too, still believes that he is leading them through hell to paradise; and to believe at such a moment is indeed to be Man.

Berezina is the Styx of this inferno. The Emperor is hard-pressed towards it, tracked like a hare and pursued from all sides: Kutuzov from the east, Wittgenstein from the north, Tchichagov from the south—all close round him to make an end of the "Anti-Christ dog" to the joy of all good Orthodox.

He knows this; knows that Berezina for him is what Ulm was for Mack—a trap, the Caudine Forks, the final humiliation—surrender. He knows, and nevertheless is heading straight towards it, because there is nowhere else to go. To make matters worse, he knows this desperate plight is caused by his own fault. On the advance to Moscow victory appeared so certain that he had ordered all the pontoon baggage to be burnt at Orsha, and now he no longer possessed any means to cross the river. As ill-luck would have it, there was a thaw, the ice had broken up and the river was covered with ice-floes.

Napoleon reaches Berezina on the 25th November. Already Tchichagov is on the look-out for him at Borissov; and Wittgenstein is on the point of joining up with Kutuzov closing upon him like a clamp.

"The position was such, that it seemed doubtful whether one Frenchman, even the Emperor himself,

would succeed in escaping," testifies General Rapp. "Our position is desperate," says Marshal Ney; "If Napoleon discovers a way out, it means the devil himself is his ally!" "I offered to save him alone by arranging for him to cross the river a few miles away and be taken to Vilna by some loyal Poles, but he would not hear of it. My opinion is we shall never get out of this alive. . . . We shall all perish—after all one cannot capitulate!" [26] says Murat.

The eve of Berezina is marked by an awe-inspiring ceremony. The Emperor orders a trooping of all the army colours. A big bonfire is lit and the colours thrown into the fire in order that they should not fall into enemy hands. "The men stepped out of the ranks, one by one, and cast into the fire that which they cherished more than life itself. I never witnessed greater humiliation and despair: it was like a slap in the face of the whole Army." [27]

These sacred eagles—these colours which had spanned the earth with their wings from Mount Thabor to Gibraltar, from the Pyramids to Moscow, are now being consumed and soaring in flames towards heaven.

How pale, how deadly pale the Emperor's face is, pale as the dead-white snow, yet radiant as if he had overcome his foes: the self-consummation of Moscow was answered by the self-consummation of the eagles.

The colours, the Army's honour, were burnt by his order; so he knew there was no escape and deceived no one. He knew this as well as that twice two make four, and still believed in a miracle. And always, as in the life

[26] Rapp, *Mémoires*.
[27] Constant, III.

of the Man so in the lives of all men—where there is faith, there also is the miracle.

Tchichagov has retired from Borissov, the other bank is deserted; the way across the river clear. Men can scarcely believe their eyes. "Impossible! Impossible!" murmurs Napoleon, and his pale face grows paler still: "So once more it is my Star!" he adds gazing up to heaven.[28] Henceforth his star will forsake him no more until the very end, though it will lead him by other ways than he anticipates.

The ford of Studenka, about eight miles above Borissov, was the only possible place for crossing the river were it not watched by Tchichagov. Marshal Oudinot was dispatched to the ford of Ukolody, twenty-five miles to the south of Borissov down stream to create a demonstration and lure Tchichagov away from Studenka. Napoleon scarcely believed in the success of this enterprise: Tchichagov could not be so mad as to let himself be deceived by such crude methods. Yet deceived he was; spell-bound beneath the hypnotic gaze of the "Daimon," like a bird under the eye of a snake.

With mathematical precision he carried out his enemy's whole plan to the very hour: "They quitted Borissov simultaneously: Tchichagov bound for Ukolody, Napoleon for Studenka." [29]

Here, on the morning of the 26th, the French started building two bridges; a wider one for the artillery, baggage and cavalry, and another narrower for the infantry. Beams and planks from demolished peasant huts served

[28] Ségur, V.
[29] Ségur, V.

as piles and trestles, nails and cramps were fashioned out of limber wheel scrap-iron.

The men who drove in the stakes not only stood for six or seven hours at a stretch up to their waists in icy cold water, but were obliged to push off enormous blocks of floating ice; those who failed to do so were themselves carried away and drowned.

Their faces, haggard and blue with the cold, looked a ghastly sight. Many fell dead on the spot. Not a drop of spirits to warm them, and snow their only bed.[80] These obscure heroes, though they did not shed their blood in battle but merely let it freeze in their veins, are surely worthy of ranking among the bravest.

By the 27th the bridges were ready. Napoleon crossed over with the Guard and the corps of Marshal Ney. The main task was accomplished: the Emperor, the Empire, the honour of the Great Army were saved.

Tchichagov, at last recovering his senses, rushed to Studenka on the 28th. Wittgenstein and Kutuzov by forced marches were hastening to his assistance. They might appear at Studenka at any moment. It was necessary to speed up the crossing. But the ramshackle artillery bridge unable to bear the weight of heavy cannon, loaded carts and horses, collapsed. There was a general stampede towards the foot-bridge, already blocked up by carts, and crowds of sick and wounded, laggards, women, children, old men—all the thousands of fugitives from Moscow. The artillery had to force its way through them all.

Just then cannon shots were heard firing from either bank, and the terrible news spread like wildfire along

[80] Marbot, IV. Constant, III.

the bridge: "Tchichagov, Wittgenstein!" Cannon balls whizzed overhead and began to drop into the crowd. Frantic with terror, people trampled one another, fought and threw each other into the river. Soldiers hacked a way for themselves with swords and bayonets, and the corpses of the suffocated floated down-stream standing upright as if alive.

Men became beasts. Yet here too deeds of noble self-sacrifice shone like stars in a dark night. Men gave way to women, adults to children; those who themselves were doomed, saved the perishing. One brutal-faced gunner, who a minute ago was making way for himself by hacking right and left with his sword, suddenly caught sight of a mother and child drowning in the river; he stooped and at the risk of being himself trampled to death, seized the child and pressed it with a mother's tenderness to his heart.[31]

The guns rolled over human bodies. The cracking of the ice-floes in the water, mingled with the crunching of broken bones on the blood-soaked bridge.

Men hung over the water, clinging to the bridge by one hand until it was crushed under a wheel, then fell into the river.

The air resounded with inhuman yells, groans, curses, prayers, and from afar came the echo: "*Vive l'Empereur*!" like the despairing cry of souls in hell to their Redeemer.

Next spring the governor of Minsk caused twenty-four thousand corpses to be collected and burnt at Studenka. While ten years later, so the story ran, the fisher folk

[31] Ségur, V.

on the Berezina still came across little islands and mounds formed of French bones clotted together with slime and overgrown with forget-me-nots.[32]

Blue as the sky above them, these blossoms seemed to bear a message to the living: "Pause here, ye children of men, lest you forget those who perished here, those who followed the Man through hell to Paradise. To him and to them, let there be eternal memory and everlasting glory!"

[32] Fournier, III.

SUNSET

FROM MOSCOW TO WATERLOO

I

LEIPZIG

1813

Who is the pallid man driving at breakneck pace day and night by postal relays across Europe? Wrapped in a great coat, his hat pulled over his eyes, huddled in a corner of the sleigh or closed carriage not daring to look out. Is he a timid courier carrying secret documents, a furtive military spy, or a deserter from the Great Army and traitor to the Emperor? Nay, it is the Emperor himself.

Having quitted Smorgon on the Berezina on the 6th December, he dashed through Vilna, Warsaw, Dresden, Mainz, right across Europe in twelve days, and on the night of the 18th reached the Tuileries.

Slowly he ascends the Palace stairs, and the vision of a face flitters before him. Is it not the face of that grenadier whom, long ago, on the march to the Berezina in 40 degrees of frost he had asked: "Are you cold, *mon ami?*" "No, Sire, when I look at you, I am warm!" Warmed as by the sun in an icy inferno. But gone is the sun, and the grenadier is frozen to death, as probably the rest of the army is freezing by now. The Emperor had very nearly borne it in his arms out of the icy inferno,

but dropped it and fled, forsaking the army in hell. Either forsake the army or France—again that dilemma confronted him, as it did in Egypt, and again he decided as before: abandoned the army for France; heard the call of Destiny and followed it as a child follows its mother's voice.

"His Majesty is in better health than ever before," was stated in the 29th, the Berezina bulletin of the Great Army, received two days before Napoleon's return to Paris, and the contents of which struck horror into all hearts. "Families, dry your tears: Napoleon is well!" railed Chateaubriand in bitter mockery.[1] Of what? It was the Emperor's duty to announce he was "alive and well," since the mere rumour of his death, circulated by that bold conspirator General Malet had been almost sufficient to overthrow the dynasty. This took place immediately after Moscow; what could not have happened after Berezina?

"On his return to Paris he was in excellent spirits," recalled the Emperor's valet Constant: "He was exactly the same as at the beginning of the Russian campaign, his face had the same expression of serenity—it seemed as if for him the past had never existed." [2]

He spent the winter as usual. There were the prim kisses of Marie-Louise wiped off by a handkerchief, the little king of Rome was cutting his teeth; there were the session of the Council of State; audiences to foreign ambassadors; whole nights spent in work; the glittering clusters of candelabras in the Pavillion of Flora; the winding of the hunting horn in the forest of Fontaine-

[1] Lacour-Gayet.
[2] Constant, III.

bleau—everything as usual. He had slept and dreamt a nightmare—Moscow, Berezina. . . . Awoke and it faded out of his memory. "I seemed to be created for great misfortunes; my soul was like marble beneath their blows; their lightnings merely grazed but could not smash it." [3] "I am established on a rock." [4]

But even a rock trembles beneath him. "The explosion," predicted by Blücher, happened in Germany.

On the 23rd February 1813, the King of Prussia Frederic-William III, and the Emperor of Russia Alexander I, signed the Treaty of Kalisz, by which Prussia was to be re-established within her frontiers of 1806, and Alexander pledged himself not to lay down arms till Germany be freed from the French yoke.

Prussia declares war on France. Sweden joins the coalition under the auspices of the heir-apparent Bernadotte, Prince of Pontecorvo, formerly a Marshal of France.

Russia, Prussia, Sweden—in the north; Spain, and Portugal—in the south; in the west—England; in the east—Austria, already vacillating; all Europe is like a volcano in eruption.

A mobilization of 180,000 conscripts is announced in France on the 5th April. "It proceeds so rapidly and smoothly that the troops seem to spring out of the ground of themselves." [5]

The Emperor having confided the regency to Marie-Louise, departs from Paris and proceeds to Mainz. The army of 100,000 assembles on the left bank of the Saal and advances eastward, towards Leipzig.

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[3] *Mémorial*, IV.
[4] Roederer.
[5] Marmont, V.

The 2nd May—the lightning-like victory over the Russo-Prussians at Lutzen; on the 20th, a second victory at Bautzen. The allies retreat to Silesia in disorder. The Great Army is risen from its icy grave on the Berezina. The coalition is horror-struck.

The Pleswitz Armistice is signed at Pleswitz on the 4th June. Metternich proposes to Napoleon to take part in the Prague congress of the Allied Powers. But, on the 26th, after an interview at Dresden lasting eight hours and in the course of which he, like a clever physician, sounds the miraculously-resurrected patient, he announces: "He is done for. *C'est un homme fini.*" [6] "Bonaparte is a monster; he must be annihilated; as long as he remains alive, he will be the scourge of the world!" Thus does "that scoundrel Pontecorvo," as Marshal Berthier brands Bernadotte, act as the mouthpiece of "public opinion," i.e., of the Coalition.[7] "Kill him, destroy the monster, crush the head of the Serpent!" raves Alexander in mystical delirium.

"My chief mistake lay in that I credited my opponents with more intelligence than they actually possessed. I knew I was indispensable to Europe and thought they knew it too, and would not want to ruin me," [8] Napoleon said later at St. Helena.

The Prague Congress was merely a pretext on the part of the Allies to gain time and draw Austria into the Coalition. They propose that France should return within her natural frontiers, the Pyrenees, the Alps and the Rhine. But before Napoleon had time to reply, the congress was

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[6] Lacour-Gayet.
[7] Lacour-Gayet.
[8] *Mémorial*, III.

declared closed, and Austria, having thrown off her mask, had joined the Allies.

The armistice is ended, war is continuing.

The 26th-27th August—Napoleon's victory at Dresden—"fortune's parting smile, from then onwards a chain of unheard-of, fatal calamities sets in." [9]

"I suffered all the more, because I foresaw the issue. My star was paling, the reins were slipping out of my hands, and yet I could do nothing," the Emperor recalled afterwards.[10] He sees, hears, knows everything, and is powerless to react, as one plunged in lethargic sleep.

He could have annihilated the whole Prussian army after the victory of Dresden; already he was in pursuit of it, when suddenly he fell ill, poisoned as was generally believed. He was obliged to return to Dresden, where he spent a day in bed, but that one day deprived him of the fruits of all his triumphs. No sooner is his back turned, than his generals and marshals suffer reverses: Blücher defeats the French army in Silesia, Bernadotte—in Prussia. Vandamme is beaten at Kulm in Bohemia. Westphalia rises against him, then Bavaria. The King of Wurtemberg warns Napoleon that the whole Confederation of the Rhine is about to turn against him, and advises him to retire beyond Mainz. The Coalition is closing round him in a threatening semi-circle. He retreats towards Leipzig. Here he is overtaken by the Allies and forced to accept battle.

The first day, the 16th October, the issue remained undecided; after six attacks, the enemy leaves the French masters of the field, though of nothing else.

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[9] *Mémorial*, III.
[10] *Mémorial*, II.

On the 17th, the Russian army under Bennigsen joins the Austrians under Schwarzenberg; Bernadotte's northern army also enters the firing line. The ends of the dreaded semi-circle meet in a running noose. Napoleon asks for a truce; it were better not to have done so—it merely exposed his weakness. The Allies do not even deign to answer him; to-morrow is the battle.

The fighting commenced at 8 o'clock in the morning; by 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the Austrian line, after a third attack of the Old Guard, was shaken—one more effort, and they would take to flight. Of a sudden something strange, and at first utterly incomprehensible, happens in the very centre of the French formation: a whole corps of Saxonian infantry, twelve thousand men, followed by the Wurtemberg cavalry make a dash for the enemy lines. It was at first thought to be a charge. No, they halted, turned about facing the French, and discharged a volley against them out of their own fire-arms. "The mean traitors!" General Marbot, a participator in the battle, exclaims indignantly.[11] Why "mean"? They refused to be "universal" like Napoleon—Robespierre, and preferred to remain German; the small corpuscle of mercury merely became absorbed in the larger one—this is not "meanness" but physics. The flesh and blood of nations rose in revolt against the phantom of universalism, and the phantom faded away.

A terrible gap, as if its very heart had been torn out, gaped in the centre of the French army. But it closed its ranks all the more firmly, and still the battle raged till nightfall.

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[11] Marbot, IV.

When darkness fell, both armies had retained their positions of the morning. "We had not lost an inch of ground," wrote Marbot.[12]

Still, the French were almost completely surrounded; they numbered forty thousand in killed and wounded; out of two hundred and twenty thousand shells there remained only sixteen thousand—enough for a couple of hours' fighting. The Emperor commands a withdrawal.

The only way open to retreat is the bridge across the Elster in the Lindenau suburb of Leipzig. The bridge is mined in order to be blown up after the passage of the army. They started crossing on the 19th and continued all through the night of the 20th. That morning Blücher with his Prussians forced his way into Leipzig and charged the retreating French. Still holding out, they defended the bridge.

Suddenly a terrific explosion shook the city: the bridge had been blown up. The N.C.O. in charge of the explosives, seeing a squadron of Cossacks, thought they were attacking the bridge and sprung the mine. One half of the army remained on the opposite bank. A general slaughter ensued: Russians, Germans, Swedes and Austrians decimated the French all day till nightfall.[13]

What about the Emperor? "He slept calmly for two hours, and only awoke at the sound of the explosion," recalls his secretary Fain.[14] He awoke to find the army annihilated, the Empire collapsed. Berezina—Elster; there was the beginning, here—the end. So this is what

[12] *Ibid.*
[13] Marbot, V.
[14] Fain. Ségur, VI.

he had fled from Russia for; this is how he had saved France!

"As if this s. . of a b. . . . knows what he is doing," Marshal Augereau exclaimed to Marshal Macdonald. "Don't you see, he has lost his head? The scoundrel wanted to desert us all, to sacrifice us all!" [15] Meaning that the Emperor having himself crossed the bridge with the Guard had ordered it to be blown up to cover his own retreat.

"Is it not time to put an end to this and prevent his ruining France as he has ruined the army?" asks Marshal Ney.[16]

"He was so worn out and tired, that frequently when one came to him for orders, he would merely whistle, leaning back in his chair with his feet on the table," recalls Stendhal.[17]

"In spite of all my misfortunes, it seems I am still the most powerful monarch in Europe, and my affairs may improve," says Napoleon a week after the Leipzig *dêbacle* and in full retreat towards the Rhine.[18] He, who can find words such as these and at such a moment, is not yet "worn out"; his "soul is still marble; the lightning has not shattered, but merely grazed it."

Can his affairs "improve"? Yes, if such is his desire. But does he want them to? *Is it worth while?*

To save the retreating army, his generals offered to set fire to all the Leipzig suburbs except Lindenau, where the withdrawal across the bridge could then be continued

[15] Macdonald.
[16] Ségur, VI.
[17] Stendhal.
[18] Lacour-Gayet.

under cover of the burning buildings. The army, France, himself would then be saved. But in pity for the city he refused; and "this misplaced magnanimity cost him his crown," says Marbot, the very man who judges him so severely for the comparatively insignificant "villainy" of Bayonne.[19] "A man like myself does not care a snap for the lives of a million people." And yet here, care he apparently did.

Borodino—Leipzig; who knows, if here too, as there, he did not of a sudden realize that *the game was not worth the candle.* "Up to about thirty victory can dazzle and fame gloss over the horrors of war, but later. . . ." "Never has war seemed so abhorrent to me!"

He realized this, and fell a-weary, dropped asleep from boredom; longed for the end to come, as the sun, sinking towards the blood-red west, yearns after the peace of the starlit night.

The plight of the army which escaped annihilation was scarcely better than of that which had perished. Destitute, starving and in tatters, it withdrew or rather fled demoralized, towards the Rhine. The ravages produced by typhus were such that not only were all the hospitals and houses overcrowded with the sick, but the streets and roadways were strewn with corpses. Picked men, great war heroes, were reduced to a "bestial state";[20] they trudged on, urged by a single hope—to die in France.

The ghost of the Great Army had indeed risen from its icy Russian grave.

[19] Marbot, IV.
[20] Lacour-Gayet.

II

THE ABDICATION

1814

Prussia, Austria, Sweden, Russia, Spain—all Europe is ready to hurl itself on France like a pack of hounds on a tracked animal. Still, before venturing into his den, it is necessary to mesmerize the lion.

Metternich, the head cook of the Allied kitchen, concocts the Frankfurt notifications: the diplomatic seamstresses are preparing a straight-waistcoat for the frenzied giant. Once more the Allies propose that France should withdraw within her "natural boundaries." This, however, is a farce exactly similar to that of the Prague Congress. Before Napoleon had time to answer, the following proclamation appeared: "The Allied Powers are at war not against France, but against that predominance which, to the misfortune of Europe and France, the Emperor Napoleon has too long enjoyed outside the limits of his Empire." Under cover of an offer of peace, it is a declaration of war: "The Powers will not lay down arms until they succeed in safeguarding their peoples from the innumerable calamities which for twenty years have oppressed Europe." [1] As expressed by "that scoundrel Pontecorvo," this reads: "Napoleon is a monster; he must

[1] Lacour-Gayet.

be annihilated, for as long as he remains alive, he will be the scourge of the world." Schwarzenberg invades France by way of Alsace, Bernadotte through Belgium, Wellington—from across the Pyrenees. Blücher advances on Paris, followed by Alexander. The Allies' field army numbers three hundred and fifty thousand men, with a reserve of six hundred and fifty thousand and the whole of this million strong army hurls itself upon wellnigh defenceless France.

After a quarter of a century's revolutionary and imperial wars, France yearns for peace as a man dying of thirst longs for a drop of water. The older men are sleeping in the sands around the Pyramids; the middle-aged beneath the snows of Russia; the youth—in the marshes around Leipzig; none but almost children remain. Women and children are tilling the fields. "In the absence of horses for the plough, one can use a spade," the Minister of the Interior explains by way of encouragement.[2] Children are tilling the fields, and themselves will be reaped in a blood-red harvest in place of corn.

France yearns for peace, and knows that Napoleon means—war, and no longer even triumph but destruction. Nay, it is triumph still. "All the people are for him; their faith in him is boundless," says a confidential police report.[3]

"You elected me, I am the creature of your hands, it is your duty to defend me," the Emperor harangues the National Guard legions on the 23rd January, before setting forth upon the French campaign.[4]

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[2] H. Houssaye, *1814*.
[3] H. Houssaye, *1814*.
[4] Lacour-Gayet.

"His first, the Italian, and last, the French campaigns were the most brilliant of all," is the tribute of Napoleon's enemy, Chateaubriand.[5]

"The hundred thousand man," the Allies had named him. This meant, that with him to lead them the strength of the army is increased a hundred thousand fold. "The swiftness and force with which we struck our blows have wrested these words from them," the Emperor was wont to recall later: "Never have such miracles been accomplished by a handful of brave men. Many of them remained unknown because of our defeats; but the enemy kept a record of them on his body and estimated them at their true value. In those days we were indeed hundred-armed giants." [6]

Who are the "we"? The generals and marshals? No! "My generals were growing apathetic, unwieldy and consequently unlucky. There were no longer the same men as at the beginning of the Revolution. . . . Truth to tell, they were loth to fight any more. I had showered upon them both honours and wealth. Having once tasted of the cup of delectation, they wanted nothing beyond peaceful existence, and were willing to purchase it at any price. The sacred fire was extinguished; they wished to be like the marshals of Louis XVI." [7] "Private soldiers and army lieutenants still fought for victory, but the general staff officers only for peace," writes the chronicler of that campaign.[8]

This, however, was not surprising. How many of

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[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Mémorial,* III.
[8] H. Houssaye, *1814.*

them, like Marmont for instance, had spent not more than three months in Paris during these last ten years? The war to them seems endless. Where will they stop—on the Rhine, Nyeman, Euphrates, Indus, or like Cain and the Wandering Jew—nowhere and never?

"Whither are we going? What will happen to us? If he falls, shall we fall too?" The Emperor hears the frightened whispering going on behind the closed doors of the staff headquarters.[9] "Peace to France, to Napoleon —war"; the marshals pin their faith to this proclamation of the Allies.

As in the army—so it is in Paris. Already there, proposals are afoot to depose him on the plea of insanity.[10] Talleyrand is preparing for him the fate of Paul I of Russia, while the former Minister of Police Fouché, now in the south of France, murmurs softly to the Emperor's sister Princess Eliza of Tuscany: "There remains no other choice for us, Your Highness, but to assassinate the Emperor!" [11]

No, his fellow-champions are neither the generals nor marshals, but the last living veterans of the Old Guard and the young conscripts, the smooth-lipped boys, so like girls, the Marie-Louises, as they were then called. These could be recognized at once by their unmartial bearing, their peasant dress under the soldier's field-coat and their "unchanging calm as if inborn courage." [12] "They simply spurt courage!" the Emperor himself exclaims admiringly.[13] "Ah, what heroism lurks in the French na-

[9] *Ibid.*
[10] H. Houssaye.
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] Marmont, VI.
[13] Lacour-Gayet.

tion!" wrote Marshal Marmont, recalling an incident of two conscripts. "One of them was standing under fire and calmly listening to the whizz of bullets, but did not fire himself. 'Why don't you fire?' I asked him. 'I wouldn't mind firing like anyone else, provided someone loaded my musket,' he replied naively. The poor lad did not even know how to load a musket. Another one, more astute, said to his commanding officer: 'You take aim so well, your honour. Will it please you to take my musket, and I'll hand you the cartridges.' The officer did so, and the boy remained standing never blinking under terrific fire throughout the battle." [14]

"How could they even be called soldiers, these countless ephemeræ of war, who appear in the ranks one day to fall the next?" [15]

They fall

"As lilies of the field beneath the reaper's ruthless scythe."

"The young Guard melts away like snow in the sunshine," says the Emperor. "Herod's massacre of the innocents," growls that stern old veteran, General Drouot as he watches their lines mown down by Prussian cannon.[16]

Yet no sooner do they learn to hold a musket, than they fight as well as the old whiskered grenadiers who have outlived Berezina and Leipzig.

It is these holy children of France—her sacred soul—who are at one with the Emperor. "I am now ready to be

[14] Marmont, VI.
[15] Ségur.
[16] Ségur, VI.

offered," the whole army might say ascending like Joan of Arc upon the pyre.

Men revile him as the "Anti-Christ," but children sing "Hosanna!" "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise." And the trust and love they bear for him is proof that there is in him something of the child and of goodness, perhaps even of holiness. He too will "be offered." Does he desire this? Has he at last understood, *remembered* his desire, his life-long craving? Nay, he has not, nor may be ever will.

Then came a sudden impetus for victory; for if a holy war does exist, it is only in defence of the fatherland. At the head of his juvenile army he himself appeared to become young again. "Let my enemies realize that I am the same as I was at Wagram and Austerlitz!" [17] And at Marengo, Arcola, Favorita. . . . "I have again put on my riding boots of the Italian campaign!" [18]

The early days of the Allies' advance through defenceless France are almost like a triumphal procession. It is a facile triumph: three hundred thousand men against thirty thousand—ten to one.

In the first battle—La Rotière, the enemy is victorious. Napoleon, who had no time to concentrate his troops, withdrew before overwhelming numbers.

"Henceforth we have nothing to fear from him, and Your Majesty may well proclaim: 'I grant peace to the whole world!' " said the Russian General Baron Saken in a congratulatory message to Alexander I.[19]

Napoleon defeated in France is the lion run down in

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[17] H. Houssaye, *1814.*
[18] Lacour-Gayet.
[19] H. Houssaye.

his den. "The campaign is over," declare the Allies; "It is barely begun," says Napoleon. On the 10th February—Champaubert; 11th — Montmirail; 12th — Chateau-Thierry; 13th—Vauchamps; 18th—Montereau; victory follows victory, lightning flash after lightning flash, as in Italy. The enemy is in disorderly retreat to the Vosges. "The Allies are unaware that at this moment I am closer to Munich and Vienna than they to Paris." [20] Indeed, they are. They send peace proposals from their congress at Chatillon. It is again a farce, similar to those of Prague and Frankfort, merely to prove that peace with Napoleon is impossible. Again they are trying to mesmerize the lion in order to gain time and muster their reserves; it is the same straight-waistcoat, only that of Chatillon is even tighter than that of Frankfort; instead of the "natural boundaries"—the pre-revolution ones. "What? After so much effort, bloodshed and victories, to leave France smaller than when I received her? Never! Acceptance would be a base act of treason," replies Napoleon and continues his pursuit of Blücher: he is on the point of overtaking him and ending the war by one swift lightning stroke.[21]

Blücher is running not away, however, but forward; with desperate temerity he crosses the Marne, blows up the bridge in his rear, and heads direct on undefended Paris. In this he is assisted by the French marshals. It suffices for Napoleon but to turn away, for them to be beaten. On the 27th February Marshal Oudinot retreats at Bar-sur-Aube. "Treason!" shout the soldiers, when they see they are being led into action without artillery.

[20] Lacour-Gayet.
[21] Lacour-Gayet.

To crush Blücher, Napoleon is pressing him towards Soissons, an important strategical point on the high road between Mons and Paris. And crush him he would have done, had Soissons but held out another thirty-six hours. But the commandant, Brigadier-General Moreau surrenders the fortress "with honours." "Shoot him within twenty-four hours!" the Emperor shouts and nearly weeps from fury. Even supposing he were shot—what is the use? Blücher is saved; he enters the fortress and shuts himself in.

On the 7th March—Craonne; 11th—Laon; 21st—Arcis-sur-Aube; fruitless victories, which are defeats; thunderbolts into the void. The French do not give up an inch of ground, but their numbers are dwindling. Death is reaping its blood-red harvest of innocents; "the young Guard is melting like snow in sunshine," while the enemy is multiplying; on and on come their countless hordes, ever louder crashes the million-fold avalanche.

"The eagle has been pecked to death by the carrion," [22] these few words summarize the whole campaign. Wounded to death, he parries their attacks with such force, that every stroke of his claws sends their crows' feathers flying; but he is alone, and the carrion are legion; they will overwhelm and peck him to death.

On the 25th March the marshals Mortier and Marmont sustain a crushing defeat at Fère-Champeroise. The last barrier obstructing the Allies' advance having thus fallen, Blücher, Alexander and Schwarzenberg together advance on Paris.

Napoleon receives news of this at Saint-Dizier on the

[22] Constant, IV.

27th. Here was the beginning of the campaign and here too, its close: the fatal circle is joined up. The Emperor spends the night alone, locked up in his room, plunged in thought, brooding over maps. What is to be done? To defend or abandon Paris? From the very beginning of the campaign he struggled between these two conflicting decisions. If the enemy reaches Paris it is all over—the Empire is done for. "While I live, Paris will not be surrendered." "We shall be buried beneath the ruins of Paris." [23] Why, then, had he given orders for the Empress-regent to quit Paris with the little Heir-apparent? Why did he recall the army corps of Mortier and Marmont, which were covering the approaches to the capital? "He always foresaw the alternative of abandoning Paris, and had gradually steeled himself to the idea," recalls an eye-witness, the Emperor's secretary Fain.[24]

Yet now, at the last moment he vacillates. He knows that the surrender of Paris would signify a French retaliation for the Russian surrender of 1812, for the self-consummation of Moscow—the self-consummation of Paris; to retire into the depths of France and raise the nation in a war-revolution against the invaders; if Spain, thus roused, had vanquished him, Napoleon,—how could France fail to overcome Blücher? It behoved but to return to '93 in dead earnest, and by discarding the Imperial purple to slay Napoleon and resurrect Bonaparte, the "Robespierre on horseback"; to proclaim: "I am the Revolution" in a tone which would shake the world to its foundations.

Can he do it? Indeed, he can! Does he want to? Is it

[23] H. Houssaye.
[24] Fain.

worth while to want? Out of pity for its population he refused to set fire to the Leipzig suburbs; shall he then ignite France and with her the whole world? Or will he say of the Revolution what he said of war: "Never had it appeared so abhorrent to me?"

Next evening he received a ciphered note from the chief of the Post Office, Lavalette: "If the Emperor desires to prevent the capitulation of Paris, his presence here is imperative; there is not a moment to lose." [25]

Napoleon and the army set out for Paris on the 29th. But their progress is too slow. On the 30th, having passed the command to his Chief of the General Staff Berthier, with orders to lead the troops to Fontainebleau, he rides post haste alone, without an escort, as he did long ago from the Berezina.

Terrible news, one after another, overtake him on the way: the enemy is nearing Paris; the Empress with his son have fled beyond the Loire; the battle is raging on the approaches to Paris.

That night the Emperor halted for relays at a post stage, Cour de France, almost on the outskirts of Paris. Suddenly in the darkness the clatter of horses' hoofs is heard upon the road. "Halt!" calls out the Emperor. General Belliard, commander of a cavalry detachment, hearing the familiar voice, springs from his horse. Napoleon draws him aside along the road alone, questions him and learns that the battle near Paris is lost; King Joseph, the Commander-in-Chief, has fled and, according to the terms, the troops must abandon the town.

"To Paris! To Paris! My carriage, quick!"

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[25] H. Houssaye.

"It is too late, Your Majesty; the act of capitulation is probably already signed. . ." [26]

But the Emperor takes no heed; he insists on hastening to Paris to sound the tocsin, light up the city, arm the whole population, fight in the streets, burn Paris, if necessary, as the Russians burnt Moscow.

Without waiting for a carriage, he strides rapidly along the road to Paris, as if he would enter it alone and unarmed.

In the sky white stars are scintillating, and red lights are flickering on earth. What are they? A Prussian bivouac on the left bank of the Seine, just outside the city wall.

The Emperor pauses and slowly, his head sunk upon his breast, retraces his steps. Too late or not too late? Perhaps the capitulation is not yet signed?

Returning to the post stage, he despatches Caulaincourt to Paris as plenipotentiary for peace proposals.

He spends the night at Saint-Dizier, poring over war maps. At daybreak a messenger arrives: the capitulation is signed, and that very morning the Allies will be entering Paris.

So did he neither defend nor surrender Paris, but himself surrendered to Destiny.

He returns by the same route to Fontainebleau, where he takes up his quarters on the ground floor in the modest apartments adjoining the gallery of Francis I.

He awaits the concentration of the troops and proposes to give battle near Paris. He disposes of sixty thousand men—one hundred and sixty thousand, counting himself,

[26] H. Houssaye.

"the Hundred Thousand Man." Perhaps, here as at Leipzig, he is once more "the most powerful monarch in Europe, and his affairs may improve." On the 1st April he learns of the Allies' triumphal entry into Paris. On the 3rd Caulaincourt delivers him Alexander's refusal of his peace proposals.

That same day, after a review of the Old and Young Guard held in the courtyard of the White Horse at Fontainebleau, the Emperor addresses the troops:

"The enemy, having forestalled us by three marches, has entered Paris. I offered the Emperor Alexander peace —at the price of a great sacrifice—all our victories since the Revolution. . . . He refused. . . . I will wage another battle near Paris. Are you ready?"

"*Vive l'Empereur!* To Paris! To Paris! We'll die among its ruins!" rang out the thundering response.[27]

"Abdication, there is nothing left for it except abdication!" murmured Ney, one of a group of marshals standing not two paces away from the Emperor. The latter did not or feigned not to hear him. He retires to his apartments. The marshals followed, Ney leading. He is pushed on and encouraged from the rear.

"Your Majesty has heard the news from Paris?"

"No! What is it?"

"Very bad: the Senate has proclaimed your deposition and relieved the people and troops from their oath of allegiance."

"The Senate possesses no legal right to perform such an act; it is a prerogative of the people alone," the Emperor calmly remonstrates. "As regards the Allies, I will

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[27] H. Houssaye.

crush them at Paris." "Our position is desperate," pursues Ney. "It is a pity peace was not concluded sooner; now there is no issue save abdication."

Enters Marshal Macdonald and joins the chorus: "The army refuses to let Paris share the fate of Moscow. . . . We are determined to put an end to this. . . . We have enough of this disastrous war without embarking upon a civil war. . . . As regards myself, I declare to Your Majesty, that never will my sword be steeped in French blood!" "You, gentlemen, have decided so, but I will otherwise; I will give battle at the approaches to Paris. . . ."

"The army will refuse to march on Paris!" Ney's voice is raised in protest.

"The army will obey me!" the Emperor raises his.

"Your Majesty, the army obeys its generals!" [28]

Napoleon knew that a word to the aide-de-camp on duty would suffice to place all the marshals under arrest. To do this, however, almost in the presence of the enemy was not so easy; besides would other men be better? Calmly he dismisses them and, left alone with Caulaincourt dictates him a conditional abdication, retaining for his son the rights to the throne and the regency for the Empress. Caulaincourt, Macdonald and Ney are the bearers of this document to Paris.

At that very moment valiant Marshal Marmont, since the Egyptian campaign the Emperor's old and trusty companion in arms, betrays him and writes to Schwarzenberg: "Desirous of promoting understanding between the army and the people, in order to prevent any likelihood

[28] H. Houssaye. Macdonald.

of a civil war and the shedding of French blood, I with my troops am willing to abandon Napoleon's army on the following terms: Firstly: that the troops be free to retire unhampered to Normandy with arms, munitions and baggage; secondly if, as a consequence of this step, Napoleon is made prisoner by the Allies, his life and liberty be guaranteed to him within a territory and country to be selected by the Allies." This means: "Dispose of him as you think fit; put him in a black-hole, bury him alive, provided you do not kill him." "This is true French magnanimity!" replied Schwarzenberg, probably not without a smile, and certainly hastened to agree.[29]

The 6th corps commanded by Marmont was stationed at Essonne, between Fontainebleau and Paris, acting as cover to Napoleon from the Allies. By his withdrawal Marmont delivered the Emperor, unarmed, to their mercy.

Alexander, regarding this betrayal as "a dispensation of divine Providence" in favour of the Bourbons, declared that he could not accept Napoleon's conditional abdication in favour of his son and demanded a complete one.

On hearing of Marmont's defection, Napoleon refused to believe it; but having at last done so, said: "He will be more miserable than I!"

"I forgive them; would that France forgave them also," he wrote in his testament, mentioning Marmont in the number of his betrayers, among whom was also Talleyrand. One can but hope that on the Day of Judg-

[29] H. Houssaye.

ment, the kiss of the devil-Talleyrand may sear the lips of Judas-Marmont.

Since the withdrawal of an army corps from Essonne rendered a battle near Paris impossible, Napoleon determined to retreat beyond the Loire. Oh, had he but done this earlier. Destruction faced him in any case—better to have perished voluntarily—to have ascended the pyre of his own free will together with holy France—Joan of Arc. And now it is an involuntary sacrifice—an execution: of himself he would not walk—he will be led; of himself he would not decide—Destiny will decide for him.

Caulaincourt, Macdonald and Ney returned from Paris to Fontainebleau on the evening of the 5th, and announced to the Emperor that the Senate had proclaimed the Comte de Provence king under the name of Louis XVIII; Alexander had refused to accept the conditional abdication and demanded that it should be absolute.

"Then it is war," the Emperor said calmly. "Well, at present war is not worse than peace!" [30]

Foreseeing the nature of Alexander's answer, he had given the order to withdraw beyond the Loire already beforehand: at daybreak on the morrow the Guard would move in the van to Malesherbes, and the rest would follow during the morning.

On the night of the 5th, the generals in a secret meeting passed a resolution not to carry out any of the Emperor's orders concerning the shifting of troops. At 2 a.m. General Friant, commanding the first division of the Old

[30] H. Houssaye.

Guard, transmitted this resolution to all the corps commanders, and in the morning Caulaincourt, Macdonald and Ney informed the Chief of the General Staff of it.

On the 6th, Napoleon assembles his marshals for the last time. Very calmly and collectedly, with mathematical precision, stressing his points by referring to the map and enumerating the remaining forces, he sketches out his plan of retreat: "Perhaps, all may yet be retrieved!" [31]

The marshals stand silent, and their faces are not even of stone like that of Destiny, but of clay, like an image of that wretched dust out of which was fashioned Adam. "All may yet be retrieved," are words of divine courage insupportable to Adam's clay.

The marshals stand silent, and when Napoleon insists upon an answer, object that he disposes of but the fragments of an army and that supposing even the retreat beyond the Loire were successful, these last efforts would only bring about civil war. And their clay-like countenances speak without words: "Abdicate!"

"You desire quietude—you shall have it!" says the Emperor, and sits down to a table and writes:

"The Allied Powers having proclaimed Napoleon to be the sole impediment to the re-establishment of peace in Europe, he, faithful to his oath, declares that he abdicates for himself and his heirs from the thrones of France and Italy, for he is ready to offer any personal sacrifice to and his very life in sacrifice for the welfare of France." [32]

"Sacrifice"; the word is pronounced and inscribed upon the eternal tables of Fate. The image of the sacrificial

[31] H. Houssaye.
[32] *Ibid.*

victim—such henceforth will be the new image of Napoleon, the Man.

At once the palace becomes deserted—everybody has fled. "One might think, the Emperor was already buried." [33]

All is quiet within the castle; all is tumult in the barracks. There, they will not hear of the abdication and are indignant at the treachery of the marshals. That night the Old Guard, in fighting formation, with colours unfurled and bearing torches, parades the streets to the sound of the Marseillaise and the Napoleonic hymn. How wondrous and awful are the faces of the soldiers; to look at them, one realizes that had he so willed, the Emperor with such men as these could have marched across and conquered the whole world.

On the 12th April Marshal Macdonald arrived from Paris to receive from Napoleon and transmit to the Allies the signed, or in the diplomatic jargon, the "ratified" terms of the abdication. Napoleon ordered him to call for them the next morning at nine o'clock.

What happened that night no one ever exactly knew. Lights suddenly appeared in the castle windows. People ran to and fro screaming, calling for help. A rumour spread of the Emperor's attempt to poison himself with the contents of the wallet he wore round his neck since the Italian campaign; but nothing happened; the poison had evaporated, and all ended in violent vomiting.[34]

He himself indignantly denied this rumour at St. Helena. Always he treated suicide with contempt: "Only

[33] H. Houssaye.
[34] Ségur, VII. Pasquier, II. Constant, IV. *Mémorial*, IV.

fools commit suicide." [35] "Who commits suicide is a deserter; to flee from life is the same as fleeing from the field of battle," is written in one of his army orders. He knew—*remembered* there was nowhere to flee.

On that awful night he may have remembered as never before, that he with all his tortures, with that worst torture of all—shame, is eternal. "To die fighting is nothing; but to die at such a moment, and in such mire—no, never, never!" [36] "I am ashamed of my abdication," he said at St. Helena: "It was my mistake, a weakness, a freak, a temperamental outbreak. I was seized with disgust and contempt towards my surroundings, towards fate itself; I wanted to throw a challenge to it." [37] He did so, and Destiny did not return it. He realized that it was his lot forever to be consumed in that shame.

What is a "ratification"? A mutually-confirmed agreement of the acceptance by both parties of certain terms in respect of one another. In this case, it signified on Napoleon's part his acceptance in place of world dominion of the island of Elba, a comic domain of Sancho-Panza, with an annuity to boot of two million francs and the retention of the Imperial title. "I am a man it may be possible to kill, but not to insult," he used to say; and now he realized all of a sudden, that he could not be killed but could be insulted.[38] They spat in his face, and he "ratifies" the spittle.

Macdonald waited on him at nine o'clock. "The Emperor was sitting by the fire, in a plain white flannel dress-

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[35] Gourgaud.
[36] Lacour-Gayet.
[37] *Mémorial,* III.
[38] Lacour-Gayet.

ing gown open at the neck, his bare feet thrust into slippers; his elbows on his knees and his face buried in his hands," recalled Macdonald. "He did not stir when I entered, though I was loudly announced. He seemed lost in profound thought," as if in "lethargic sleep," according to Bourrienne's expression.[39] "After a few minutes' silence the Duke of Vincenza (Caulaincourt) said: 'Your Majesty, Marshal the Duke of Tarento awaits your orders; he is due to return to Paris.' The Emperor appeared as if awakening from sleep and looked at me in surprise; rose, gave me his hand, and excused himself for not having heard me enter. When he showed his face, I was struck by the change in it; it had acquired a yellow, almost olive-tinted hue. 'Your Majesty is unwell?' I murmured. 'Yes, I spent a bad night,' he replied and sitting down as before, seemed again lost in profound thought. We gazed at him in silence. At last after a long pause the Duke of Vincenza spoke: 'Your Majesty, the Duke of Tarento is waiting. It would be best to hand him the ratification; its term expires in twenty-four hours, and the exchange must take place in Paris.' The Emperor, shaking off his brown study, rose; his manner was a shade livelier; but the complexion and expression of his face remained unchanged. 'I am feeling a little better,' he said." [40]

That same day he handed the ratification to Macdonald, who carried it to Paris.

The fact that Napoleon could bear all this and remain alive is perhaps a victory greater than Arcola and Marengo.

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[39] Bourrienne, V.
[40] Macdonald.

At ten o'clock in the morning, on the 20th April, the date fixed by the Allies for Napoleon's departure to Elba, the carriages were at the door. The grenadiers of the Old Guard stood at arms in the courtyard of the White Horse. Punctually at noon, as in the happy days of the Consulate and Empire, the Emperor dressed in the plain green tunic of his *chasseurs*, grey field cloak and cocked hat, descended into the courtyard. The grenadiers stood at attention, the drums sounding the *reveille*. Then the Emperor addressed them:

"Soldiers of my Old Guard, farewell! For twenty years you followed me on the paths of honour and glory. And in these last days, as in the days of fortune, you never ceased to be models of loyalty and valour. With such men as you, our cause was not lost, but the hardships of war would have become still greater. . . . I am leaving you. As to you, my friends, continue to serve France. . . . Farewell, my old comrades! I should like to press you all to my heart. . . . Give me the colour!"

General Petit presented him with the colour. He embraced and kissed the general first, then the colour.

"Farewell, my children! Let this, my last kiss, be graven upon your hearts. Be always brave and good."

The grenadiers were weeping.[41]

On the 27th April, Napoleon reached St. Raphael-Frejus, where he had landed on the return from Egypt, before the 18th Brumaire, nearly fifteen years ago. Here his sun had risen, here will it set, though not yet for good: its most regal purple ray will shoot out once more before it sinks forever.

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[41] Ségur, VII. Bourrienne, V.

III

ELBA—THE HUNDRED DAYS

1814—1815

"Elba will be the Island of Repose," said Napoleon as he landed from an English frigate at Portoferrajo, the principal port of the island, on the 4th May.[1]

"I will here lead the existence of a justice of the peace. . . . The Emperor is dead; I am—naught, and am concerned in nothing, except my small island; nothing interests me outside my family, my little house, mules and cows." [2] Such appeared to be his feelings during the early days, perhaps even weeks and months of his sojourn at Elba. These were perhaps the recollections of his childish dreams in the little hoarding "hermitage" of Ajaccio; or those of the schoolboy of Brienne in his green "wilderness" when he returned to "a state of nature" according to Rousseau; or the dreams of the Paris student locked up in a darkened room with shutters closed and candles lit in broad daylight; or again those of the lieutenant of artillery in the Auxonne barracks about the navigator cast upon the desert island of Gorgon: "I was ruler of my island; here I could be, if not happy, at least wise and calm." [3] He may have realized—remembered that the

[1] H. Houssaye, *1815.*
[2] H. Houssaye.
[3] Masson, *Napoléon. Manuscrits inédits.*

whole world was to him "a desert island," and world dominion scarcely greater than this Lilliputian kingdom, Elba—the empire of Sancho-Panza.

"Well, old growler, art feeling dull?" he once asked an old grenadier of his guard of "honour" on the island.

"Not exactly dull, Your Majesty, but not much fun!"

"Never mind, *mon ami*: one has to make the best of it!" [4]

Here is something greater than life's philosophy; it is a humble submission to Higher Powers which, he feels, are ever leading him. "*Ubicumque felix Napoleo*" was the inscription on one of the columns of San-Martino, his summer villa at Elba. He could, in truth, have been happy anywhere had he but sought happiness.

Elba did not become the "Island of Repose." Immediately on his arrival he set to work with the same all-consuming energy he displayed everywhere and always. He organizes the little island as erstwhile he did the great Empire: builds roads, hospitals, schools, theatres, barracks; reforms the customs service, the excise, the taxation; opens up mines; acclimatizes silk-worms; leases fisheries and salt mines; promotes farming; plants vineyards; improves the sanitation and architecture of Portoferrajo.

"Elba was transformed into an Island of the Blessed," recalled one of its inhabitants.[5] It seemed as if on this plot of ground Napoleon wanted to set up what he had failed to establish throughout the world—"paradise on earth," "The Golden Age."

This went on for six months, and might perhaps have

[4] Houssaye, *1815*.
[5] *Ibid*.

lasted longer had Napoleon been left in peace. But, as in the old days the Brienne schoolboys used to invade his "wilderness," so now the Allies intrude into "the Island of the Blessed."

Elba is not as isolated as Gorgon: newspapers and rumours bring him news of the outside world. The "ratification" of Fontainebleau—spitting in his face—still continues. His wife has been delivered to a licentious scoundrel and spy, Neipperg; his son, too, is snatched from him. "Thus, in ancient times, were children snatched from the vanquished to adorn the triumphal procession of the victors," the Emperor complains.[6] Louis XVIII considers the Imperial annuity of 2,000,000 francs to be excessive and retards payments, probably not so much from economy as from a desire to humiliate his enemy. At the Congress of Vienna Talleyrand and Lord Castleridge agree to exile him to some distant island in the Atlantic. "Bonaparte's fate is sealed. He will be deported to Santa-Lucia. . . . Its climate will soon rid the world of the Corsican monster," the English congratulate one another.[7]

"Napoleon at Elba is for France and Europe at large, what Vesuvius is for Naples," warns Fouché.[8] "Exile is good, the grave better still." "To have left Bonaparte alive is a great mistake. One cannot rest until there is six feet of earth above his head," is a common comment.[9] The Algerian pirates offer their services to kidnap, and the monks of Rome to stab him.

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[6] Lacour-Gayet.
[7] Houssaye, *1815*.
[8] Thibaudeau.
[9] Houssaye.

"They want to kill me—let them. . . . I am a soldier. . . . I myself will bare my breast; but I decline to be deported," he tells the English plenipotentiary Campbell,[10] it may be after reading in a newspaper sent him by Lady Holland of his projected deportation to St. Helena.[11] "St. Helena—small island." These four words written long ago in his schoolboy diary with a blank page after them—like mute Destiny—certainly did not cross his mind at the moment; but, already perhaps, his heart had thrilled with prophetic horror.

He learns that the Allies are quarrelling, may come to grips at any moment, and war will break out—this time not on his account; he knows that France hates the Bourbon, "who entered the country riding pillion behind a Russian Cossack over the bodies of the French," as depicted in the cartoons of that time. France is waiting for him, calling upon Napoleon, as "to the Messiah."

All this he learns from an emissary of Marshal Berthier, a certain Fleury de Chaboulon, a former auditor of the Council of State, who, disguised as a sailor, landed secretly at Portoferrajo from a fishing smack.

Napoleon resolves to "rend the shroud." On the 25th February 1815, he orders two vessels to be chartered and an old brig the *Inconstant* to be repaired, painted as an English ship, armed and stored with provisions. On the night of the 26th he boards the flotilla with a small army: six hundred grenadiers and *chasseurs* of the Old Guard, four hundred Corsican *chasseurs* and a hundred Polish uhlans. With this handful of men he sets out to conquer France. On the 1st March they cast

[10] *Ibid.*
[11] Lord Holland, *Foreign Reminiscences.*

anchor at Golfe-Juan between Cannes and Antibes.

A manifesto is issued to the French people: "Frenchmen," it says: "in my exile I hearkened to your desires and grievances; you demand a government of your own choice, which alone is a legal one. I have crossed the seas. Once more I come to retrieve my rights and yours." "Soldiers!" runs a proclamation to the army: "Rally to the colours of your general. His life is yours; his rights are yours and those of the people. Victory will precede us at quick march. The eagle bearing the tricolour will fly from steeple to steeple to the towers of Nôtre Dame." [12]

As he had said, so it happened. The spark kindled long ago at Frejus after the Egyptian campaign, now shot up at Golfe-Juan and instantaneously ignited the whole of France. Only then the sun was rising; now it is sinking through the storm clouds flamboyant with its most regal fiery rays. "This march from Cannes to Paris was the best time of my life," the Emperor recalled at St. Helena.[13] Never, perhaps, did he possess a greater consciousness of his immortality than in those days of his "second coming."

"The eagle flies" northward, across the Maritime Alps. The little army advances cautiously, almost creepingly through eastern Provence. The population there is mainly royalist and either indifferent or dully hostile to the Emperor. But already from the borders of Dauphiné all the people rise *en masse* at his approach as if the soil itself is astir. He is nearer than ever to Mother Earth these days, like a setting sun.

[12] Houssaye.
[13] O'Meara, II.

People from the neighbouring villages flock to meet him and when, on comparing his living face with the effigy on a five-franc coin, they ascertain that "'tis none other than himself"—they acclaim him with a never-ceasing cry of "*Vive l'Empereur*!" [14]

On approaching Grenoble on the 7th March, he encounters in the gorge of Laffrey a battalion of the 5th regiment of the line under the command of Delessart sent to intercept him. To avoid it, is impossible: on one side there is a steep hilly ridge, and lakes on the other. The Imperial vanguard of Polish uhlans rides up to the battalion. Delessart sees the terrified faces of his men and realizing that fighting is out of the question, attempts a withdrawal. But the uhlans follow them so closely, that they can feel the horses' snorting breath on their backs. Delessart commands a bayonet attack. The men obey mechanically. Here the uhlans, who have received the order not to charge at any cost, turn their horses' heads and retreat. At this moment the Emperor, ordering the men to reverse arms, alone, at the head of his old *chasseurs*, walks up to the battalion.

"Here he is! Fire!" Captain Randon commands frantically.

The men pale, their legs are trembling, their shaking fingers close tightly over their muskets. Within range of a pistol-shot Napoleon halts.

"Soldiers!" his voice rings out clear and firm: "I am your Emperor. Do you know me?"

He advances two or three paces, and opens his coat, showing the green tunic of the *chasseurs*.

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[14] Houssaye.

"If there is one among you who wishes to kill his Emperor—his general—he has it in his power."

"*Vive l'Empereur*!" rises a delirious shout. The men dash from the ranks, fall at the Emperor's feet, hug and kiss his legs, boots, sword, the lapels of his coat. At this instant he is to them indeed "the risen Messiah!" [15]

The gates of Grenoble are forced open, the garrison capitulates. The soldiers make a rush towards the Emperor "in such a frenzy that it seems as if they would tear him to pieces; he is surrounded, lifted up and borne shoulder high"—borne to Paris.[16]

The Imperial army enters Grenoble in the night, followed by a crowd of two thousand peasants armed with hatchets, pikes, pitchforks and muskets, and carrying torches, all marching to the sound of the *Marseillaise* and endless acclamations of "*Vive l'Empereur*! Long live liberty! Down with the Bourbons!" [17]

"This is the birthplace of the Revolution," inhabitants of Vizille near Grenoble tell Napoleon in their address of welcome: "We were the first to claim the Rights of Man; and here once more are liberty and France's honour resurrected." [18]

"This is a fresh attack of the Revolution," is Marshal Ney's correct definition.[19] "Most incredible of all, is that the people again want Bonaparte," writes the Russian plenipotentiary.[20] That this should be so after Moscow, Berezina, Leipzig, Paris—all the blood shed and

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[15] Houssaye.
[16] *Mémorial*, III.
[17] Houssaye, *1815*.
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] *Ibid.*
[20] *Ibid.*

before that still to be shed—is truly incredible and marvellous, like the miracle of "the second coming."

"Your Majesty always works miracles, because when first we heard of your return, we thought you had gone mad . . ." thus the deputy mayor of Macon commenced his harangue but never finished it because it was interrupted by a roar of "*Vive l'Empereur*!" [21] It was not the Emperor alone who had "gone mad," but all France also.

At Villefranche in the Lyons department two peasants buy from the innkeeper of a tavern the bones of a chicken eaten by Napoleon, to be kept as a relic.

At Lyons, a crowd of twenty thousand stands for three or four days at a stretch under his window, shouting themselves hoarse: "Long live the Revolution!" [22]

He too, conscious that he personifies the Revolution, becomes imbued with the spirit of '93, feels himself a "Robespierre on horseback" and acts with the promptitude and decision of the Convention: he prohibits the wearing of the white cockade, abolishes the old nobility and feudal titles, proclaims the deposition of the king. "I find the hatred towards the nobility and priests to be as strong as at the beginning of the Revolution," he declares.[23]

Yes, the Revolution is resurrected, and with it himself—the Man: for some—the "Beast coming out of the pit," for others—"the Messiah rising from the grave."

Says Ney, also a son of the Revolution, respectfully kissing the hand of the old Bourbon: "Your Majesty,

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[21] Houssaye, *1815*.
[22] *Mémorial*, III.
[23] Houssaye, *1815*.

I hope to capture Bonaparte and to deliver him to you in an iron cage." [24] This expression so pleases Ney that he repeats it to all and sundry, and on someone remarking that "'twere better to bring Bonaparte in a coffin than in a cage," objects: "No, you do not know Paris; Parisians must see him in a cage!" [25]

Ney, in command of the royal troops, manoeuvres between Soissons and Macon in order to capture and exterminate "the whole robber gang" at one stroke. Suddenly a letter arrives: "My brother, join me at Chalons; I will welcome you as on the day after Borodino." [26] And "the Bravest of the brave" pales, as did those soldiers at Grenoble when they heard the command: "Here he is! Fire!" Instantaneously he goes mad: "It is as if a vortex overcame me, and my brain reeled," he owned later: "I now hurled myself into the abyss, as long ago into the mouth of the cannon." [27] He betrayed the Bourbon and rallied to Bonaparte. Had he even been willing to fight, he would be powerless to do so: "as lief stop the tide with one's hands," he complained prior to his treason.[28]

Onward from Lyons to Paris, ever higher and higher soars the eagle. The triumphal march of the revolutionary crowds and troops in his wake is "like the fiery trail of a meteor on a dark night." [29]

On the night of the 20th March, the king takes to flight from the Tuileries, and on the evening of the

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[24] Houssaye.
[25] Houssaye.
[26] *Ibid.*
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] Thiébault, V.

following day the Emperor's carriage drives up to the Pavilion of Flora, and pulls up a few paces from the entrance: there is such a crush that it is impossible to reach the porch. The carriage is surrounded by the populace, the door opened, and the Emperor is lifted out bodily, borne shoulder high across the courtyard, into the vestibule, up the staircase—almost stifled, crushed to death. Already he neither sees nor hears anything, borne upon these surging billows of humanity, like a pallid blossom, abandoning himself to their impetus, with arms outstretched, head thrown back, eyes closed, a fixed smile upon his lips like a somnambulist or the god Dionysos surrounded by frenzied Bacchantes. "Those who carried him were as if demented, and thousands of others deemed themselves happy when they managed to kiss the hem of his garment or merely to touch it. . . . It seemed to me as if I were present at Christ's resurrection," recalled an eye-witness.[30]

Panic reigns at the Congress of Vienna. A declaration of the eight Allied Powers—England, Austria, Russia, Sweden, Prussia, Holland, Spain and Portugal, is signed on the 13th March: "By his return to France, Napoleon Bonaparte has placed himself outside the pale of civic and social laws and, as the disturber of world peace, has condemned himself to public execution." [31]

A seventh Coalition is formed. The plenipotentiaries of England, Austria, Russia and Prussia conclude a treaty for the "maintenance of peace," for which purpose each power mobilizes a hundred and fifty thousand men—a million total—"until Bonaparte is deprived

[30] Thiébault.
[31] Houssaye.

of the possibility of menacing the peace of Europe." [32]

The measure of panic may be gauged by the measure of fury. "We were wrong to show mercy to the French; they ought all to be exterminated!" yell the German pressmen. "The whole French nation ought to be outlawed!" "Destroy them all, like mad dogs!" [33]

Panic before Bonaparte is panic before the Revolution. This Alexander realizes better than anyone else. "Separate him, separate him from the Jacobins!" he keeps repeating and in the blood-red light of a new war, the gigantic vision of the Horseman of the Apocalypse looms before him. "Robespierre on horseback,"—"Napoleon—*Appolyon*, the Destroyer, the angel of the pit," . . . he murmurs, prognosticating on the Apocalypse: "Behold the number of the Beast . . . it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six. . . ."

The panic is wasted: this flash of the Revolution will die down as the last flaming ray of the setting sun, and once more everything will fade to its dull leaden hue; the molten gold will again become grey lead. The year 1793 will instantaneously be merged in 1811. "The Robespierre on horseback" will disappear and the Emperor Napoleon take his place.

"I crossed France. I was borne into the capital on the shoulders of the citizens amid universal acclamation; but no sooner had I entered it, than as if by magic everybody forsook me, and grew cold." [34]

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[32] *Ibid.*
[33] *Ibid.*
[34] *Mémorial*

Nay, it was he himself who had grown cold; of a sudden he became a prey to boredom, had no desire left for anything as at Borodino, fell into a "lethargic sleep" as at Leipzig: he sees, hears everything, and is powerless to rouse himself or move a finger when he is being placed in a coffin and lowered alive into the grave.

Louis XVIII had granted France a constitutional charter. Bonaparte cannot suffer himself to be outdone by a Bourbon. . . . "Napoleon, moderate your power," old Jacobins of the Convention and new liberals of the Restoration are dinning in his ears. "France desires to be free. . . . If you refuse to grant her liberty, tomorrow your subjects will revolt." [35]

Benjamin Constant, a new Sièyes-Homunculus, father of still-born constitutions, composes a liberal charter—the *Acte additionel* to be added to the Constitution of the Empire.

Only in a state of "lethargic sleep" could a man, confronted by a million-strong enemy invasion, dismount from his charger and climb into a parliamentary cart, be transformed from a revolutionary into a constitutional monarch.

He is conscious of this himself. "They want to chain the old arm of the Emperor. They drive me along a path that is not mine. France is asking: 'What has happened to the Emperor's arm, which will tranquilize Europe?' " [36]

"He became a liberal against his own convictions;

[35] Houssaye.
[36] Houssaye.

crippled and weakened, he ceased to be himself," says an honest old Jacobin.[37]

The celebration of the new Constitution, the "*Benjamine*," as it was nicknamed, and the assembly of the electoral colleges, which voted for the Additional Act, takes place on the *Champ de Mai*, formerly de Mars, on the 1st June. It is a dull and tedious ceremony. A mass is celebrated by the cardinal, and the Emperor, mounting on the throne erected in the centre of the field, swears his loyalty fealty to the new Constitution on the Bible. He was expected to appear dressed in a plain uniform of the *chasseurs* or grenadiers of the Old Guard as at Marengo or Austerlitz; instead of which he is wearing a Roman tunic, a purple mantle embroidered with golden bees, white satin hose and a white plumed, black Spanish hat. A murmur runs through the crowd: "What a masquerade!" Yes, it is an ominous masquerade; a breath of decay envelops him, as if he were a spectre risen out of the grave.

The session of the new Chamber is opened by the Emperor on the 7th June. He delivers a speech: "For the past three months owing to circumstances and the confidence of the nation, I have been invested with absolute power. Now the time is ripe for the consummation of the most ardent desire of my heart: I inaugurate a constitutional monarchy. Men are powerless to consolidate the destinies of nations; this can only be accomplished by institutions." [38]

"Men are powerless"—therefore he, *the Man*, is

[37] Thibaudeau.
[38] Houssaye.

powerless too. This is a second abdication, more bitter than the first.

"Notwithstanding all his self-control, he was unable to conceal the pain and anger caused him by this avowal; his face was deathly pale, his features drawn, his voice unwontedly sharp and piercing."

It is as if a deaf Beethoven, executing a symphony, strikes a false note, and conscious of going astray is powerless to correct himself.

The first two Allied armies, the Anglo-Dutch under Wellington and the Prussian commanded by Blücher, were advancing together to invade France through Belgium. They were but the vanguard; behind them were the reserves—Austrians, Swedes, Russians, the same million-strong avalanche as in the year before.

The War Minister Marshal Davout succeeded in mobilizing in three months one hundred and thirty thousand men. The minority of them were the fragments of the Great Army, the bulk—the "Marie-Louises." These were the last drops of France's blood. She was, at the time, like the filly ridden to death by her frenzied rider, on the point of falling and breaking his back.

Yet these men, perhaps, are the pick of the nation. An English spy writes from Paris to the Duke of Wellington: "To form an idea of the enthusiasm prevailing in the French Army, it is necessary to go back to '92, and even then the comparison is all in favour of Bonaparte." "The sentiments with which the troops are animated are neither patriotism nor enthusiasm, but absolute frenzy for the Emperor and against his

enemies," the French General Foy notes in his diary. And a French deserter adds: "they are possessed." [39]

"Never had Napoleon wielded such a terrible yet brittle weapon," writes the best recorder of the year 1815.[40]

A weapon terrible indeed, but withal how fragile; for it is too finely tapered, almost to snapping point. With such an army victory is as easy as defeat: everything depends on its *morale* and that depends on the Leader.

Who, then, is he? A Beast escaped from captivity, a runaway convict, a lunatic armed with a razor, according to the Allies? Or is he still the Leader, blazing the trail through hell into Paradise, as France still believes him to be?

The enigma will be solved by that greatest battle of modern times—Waterloo.

[39] Houssaye, *1815.*
[40] *Ibid.*

IV

WATERLOO

1815

"I triumphed at Waterloo," says Napoleon at St. Helena. All the world knows that Waterloo was Napoleon's downfall; he alone knew it to be a triumph. "I triumphed at Waterloo, and was instantly hurled into the abyss." [1] Yet prior to the fall, he soared to a height never attained before. All his life was a supreme elevation of human will-power, and its topmost pinnacle was reached at Waterloo.

"Napoleon's activity during this last campaign equalled that of a thirty-year-old general," affirms the best historian of that period.[2] "At thirty, when Napoleon is the victor of Marengo, his sun is at its zenith, and it is the same sun at Waterloo." If so, then he has roused himself in time from his "lethargy": he was dead, and is alive again.

Such is one of the two testimonies; here is another, that of an Englishman, Marshal Wolseley: throughout that campaign Napoleon was "as though beneath a pall of lethargy." [3]

[1] *Mémorial*, IV.
[2] Houssaye, *1815*. Vol. II.
[3] Houssaye, *1815*.

Whom are we to believe? Or is the contradiction fallacious?

"The consciousness of absolute success had forsaken me," declared Napoleon when narrating his reminiscences of Waterloo: "Whether this was due to the passage of years, which generally favour fortune, or whether in my imagination the spell that had hung over my miraculous career was broken . . . but I was undoubtedly conscious that something was missing. . . . Kind fortune no longer followed my footsteps and took pleasure in lavishing her smiles upon me; she was now succeeded by rigid fate, who took ample revenge for the few favours I obtained at this period as it were by force. For it is a remarkable fact, that every single success was immediately followed by a reverse." "Yet I must confess that all these strokes of fate distressed me more than they surprised me. I felt the presentiment of an unfortunate result. Not that this in any way influenced my determinations and measures, but the foreboding certainly haunted my mind." [4]

Or rather, he was possessed by two intermittent feelings, flaring up like alternating lights: that of upward flight and headlong descent. However much he roused himself from his "lethargy," its pall still hung over him; as though come to life again, death's black spot still remained visible upon the luminous body of the resurrected. Victorious, he knew he would be defeated; knew, but not for certain, and therefore felt himself compelled to fight to the last. To do so needs great strength. That is why Waterloo marks one of the su-

[4] *Mémorial*, IV.

preme summits ever attained by human will-power throughout History.

Napoleon's plan consisted in engaging and defeating one by one both the hostile armies, Wellington's Anglo-Dutch and Blücher's Prussian, which occupied Belgium, before they had time to effect a junction. For this it was necessary to transport oneself right into their midst, to the point of their supposed concentration on the high-road to Brussels. Hither Napoleon determined "to fall like a thunderbolt."

At break of day on the 15th June, the French advance columns traversed the Belgian frontier, crossed the river Sambre near Charleroi and having lightly repulsed the thirty-two thousand strong Prussian vanguard under General Ziethen, continued their northward advance. The entire manoeuvre was accomplished with complete success, with a mathematical precision and prophetic clairvoyance reminiscent of the radiant days of Austerlitz and Friedland.

The Prussian army, moving westward from Namur was expected to join the English, who were advancing southward from Brussels, along the highroad between Nivelles and Namur. Here Napoleon had resolved to station his army in a fork-shaped formation: his right flank stretched towards the east was to occupy the small town of Sombref on the road to Namur; his left—extended westward to Quatre-Bras at the crossing of the Brussels high road with that of Namur, while he himself would make his stand at Fleurus, the apex of the triangle formed by those three points, in order to descend the following day upon the first enemy forces to come

within reach; or, if both eluded him, to occupy Brussels without firing a single shot.

"How do you do, Ney, glad to see you," was the Emperor's greeting to Ney on his arrival at the front: "You will be in command of the 1st and 2nd corps. . . . Go and repulse the enemy on the Brussels road and seize the position of Quatre-Bras." [5]

That this position was the axis of the whole operation and, possibly, of the whole campaign, Napoleon perfectly realized. "If you act with determination, the Prussian army is done for. You hold the fate of France in your hands," he tells Ney next day. By this act of supreme confidence, he emphasizes that he bears Ney no grudge, neither for Fontainebleau, nor for "the cage."

Had Ney on receiving this order at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, hastened to execute it, he might have reached Quatres-Bras by 5 o'clock, and have easily captured the feebly defended position. He dallied, however, and when at last he approached the position after 7 o'clock in the evening at the head of a small vanguard detachment, he found it occupied by four thousand Nassau foot soldiers. Even then all might have gone well, had not the "Bravest of the brave," for the first time in his life, succumbed to fear and imagining himself confronted by the whole English army, postponed the fighting till the morrow in order to pull up the reserves. That same night the whole of Wellington's army was concentrated at Quatre-Bras and Ney's action was completely frustrated. To make matters worse, the Emperor, not receiving any news from him, was deluded into thinking

[5] Houssaye, *1815*.

everything was going well. The axle of the wheel had snapped, but Napoleon continued to ride upon it.

Ney's behaviour during those fateful hours, when the Emperor's fate and the destiny of France hung on his hands, is hard to understand. It was as if Napoleon's "lethargy" had communicated itself to him; the Emperor had awakened, but he had fallen asleep.

The ends of the bifurcation were, however, insufficiently expanded; the left point did not reach the Brussels roads, nor the right—that to Namur, on which Blücher's advance columns unexpectedly appeared. Nevertheless, the main task—that of separating Wellington from Blücher, had been accomplished.

On the morning of the 16th Napoleon learns that the whole of the Prussian army is advancing against him. "Three hours hence the issue of the campaign may be settled. Provided Ney carries out my orders properly, not one Prussian cannon will escape capture," says the Emperor.

A fresh order is hastily dispatched to Ney: "The Emperor is engaging the enemy upon the positions occupied by him between Bry and St. Amand. Fighting is already in progress. You are immediately to manoeuvre with the object of outflanking and encircling the enemy from the right, and then attack his rear at short range. His army is doomed provided you act promptly and resolutely. The fate of France is in your hands." [6]

The battle commenced at 3 o'clock in the afternoon in the two villages of St. Amand and Ligny. The Emperor expected Ney's arrival by six. Directly the can-

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[6] Houssaye, *1815.*

non boomed out in the Prussian rear, the Emperor would charge with his reserves against the enemy centre, overthrow it, cut off their retreat upon Sombref and, with bayonets in their backs drive them straight on to the bayonets of Ney's men: not one out of the sixty thousand Prussians would escape.

Six o'clock comes round, seven. . . . Ney's guns have not spoken. Suddenly, a strange column of thirty thousand men emerges in the French rear by Fleurus. Who are these? English or Prussians? A dim remembrance —foreboding gripped the Emperor's heart. When and where had this happened—or would happen?

"Treason! Run for your lives!" the cry is raised, and at sight of the unknown troops the soldiers take flight. To arrest the stampede, it became necessary to turn their own guns on the fugitives.

No, what happened—*will* happen, but not yet, nor here. The unknown column proved to be a French army corps under General d'Erlon, who had separated himself from Ney and executed a false manoeuvre. Ney has failed to arrive, will not arrive: the axle of the wheel had snapped, there is nothing left to ride upon. The principal manoeuvre of the battle has collapsed; the Prussian army cannot be annihilated. Still, it might be routed and cut off from the English. The Emperor commands a final charge with all reserves.

All the batteries open fire together against the Ligny heights. The Guard forms into columns of divisions. The Emperor himself will lead it into battle.

A terrific thunderstorm breaks out at this very moment. The cannon roar responds to the peals of thunder,

musket volleys to lightning flashes, as though heaven and earth were united in one gigantic combat. Did Napoleon recall, how twenty years ago at the siege of Toulon, he had led his men in a like thunderstorm to the assault of the English redoubt? His whole life-span lies between these two storms—verily God's own tempest.

By 8 o'clock, the French broke through the Prussian centre and their retreat began. The clouds are scudding eastward driven by a strong wind, the western sky is clearing, and Blücher from his post on the summit of the hill sees his whole army in full flight. But "he refuses to acknowledge himself beaten, while there is fight left in him." [7] He precipitates his last reserves into the *mêlée*, and himself, a hoary man of seventy, dashes like a fiery youth into the fray.

The battle rages until nightfall. Blücher's charger falls wounded, crushing the rider. His aide-de-camp Count Nostitz, rushes to his assistance.

At this very moment, a squadron of French cuirassiers charges past them, almost over them at full gallop, but does not recognize them in the darkness; a minute later, gallops back in retreat, and again they remain undetected. Nostitz calls to the Prussian dragoons. Blücher, badly bruised and half-unconscious is released from under his charger, placed upon an N. C. O's horse and brought away to the distant rear in the general torrent of fugitives. There are multitudes of them: eight thousand will be rounded up between Liège and Aix next morning.

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[7] Houssaye.

"Old Blücher has had a d——d good licking and has gone back to Wavre . . ." says Wellington, with a guffaw like the rasping of a nail against glass. "As he has gone back we must go too. They will say in England that we've been blown up, but I can't help that." [8]

On the morning of the 17th, Napoleon learns that the Prussians are retreating on Liège and Namur, that Wellington is still stationed at Quatre-Bras, and Ney is in a state of "lethargy."

"I will attack the English, and you pursue the Prussians," the Emperor tells Marshal Grouchy, all unconscious of the fateful portent of his own words.

Grouchy, however, is conscious of it. Never during his long years of service, had he been confronted with such a stupendous task: to bear the whole brunt of the Prussian army, albeit routed, but still dangerous as a wounded wild animal and furiously at bay. A valiant cavalry general, he is firm, intelligent and prompt to execute orders, but withal "a man of a single hour, a single manoeuvre, a single effort," [9] a local tactician not a general strategist. The worst of it is, he is aware of this himself, and the consciousness of this hampers and paralyzes his energy in action. Yet for a Marshal of France to say: "Pardon me, Your Majesty—I am afraid!" is unthinkable. Besides, it is too late: he receives from the Emperor a detailed instruction of how with his corps of thirty-three thousand men, to track Blücher and endeavour to ascertain whither he is going and

[8] Houssaye.
[9] *Ibid.*

whether he intends to or is able to effect a junction with Wellington.

Oh, would Napoleon had realized what he was doing! But he neither knows nor sees: someone is guiding him, as a blind man is led, by the hand. Blücher being disposed of, there remains Wellington. Towards midday, the Emperor at the head of light cavalry—the bulk of the army following, is galloping along the Namur road towards Quatre-Bras. He learns on the way that Wellington has or is about to abandon these positions, and that Lord Uxbridge alone is there with light cavalry to cover the retreating army. What! Blücher has slipped away yesterday—Wellington to-day. "Every single success was immediately followed by a reverse." Had not someone Invisible continuously hampered his movements, some Invisible presence tripped him at every step, Napoleon would not, like Ney, have remained in a state of "lethargy," but would have started some six hours sooner, overtaken and smashed Wellington—and ended the whole campaign at one stroke. Possibly it is not yet too late.

Cuirassiers, *chasseurs*, uhlans, the horse batteries of the Guards are advancing along the road at a brisk canter. The Emperor, with the Guard on duty, is riding in front.

At the first news of the French approach, Lord Uxbridge runs out into the road. Wellington too is here, just ready to start. The enemy is still far away; only glinting specks of steel sparkle in the sunlight. "These are bayonets," says Wellington; then having adjusted his field-glasses and recognizing the cuirassiers,

he hands over the command of the rear-guard to Uxbridge, and himself follows his retreating army at a gallop heading northward along the Brussels road towards Waterloo.

It is 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Black clouds are scurrying across the wind-swept sky. A storm is approaching from the northwest. Quatre-Bras is already wrapped in shadow, while the road with the advancing French is still bathed in sunlight.

Uxbridge, on horseback, is stationed beside a mounted field battery, its muzzles turned towards the French. Suddenly, upon the crest of a distant hill, there appears a rider followed by a small band of men. He and his charger, lit up from behind, loom out black as if cast in bronze against the luminous sky.

"Fire! Fire! Aim straight!" shouts Uxbridge having recognized the Emperor. The guns boom out.

Napoleon orders his field batteries to go forward. But Uxbridge refuses to accept the challenge: he is afraid the French are too close. He orders the cannon to withdraw and beats a hasty retreat.

That same moment the thunderstorm breaks forth. Amid deafening peals of thunder, lightning flashes, pelting rain and wind English hussars and gunners, *pêle-mêle*, are galloping off "like mad." "Running like a fox before the hounds," as an eye-witness describes this pursuit.

"Faster, faster, for God's sake!" Lord Uxbridge shouts, as terrified as if the Horsemen of the Apocalypse in whirlwind and lightning were after him.[10]

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[10] Houssaye.

Northward along the Brussels road they gallop, towards Mont-Saint-Jean and Waterloo, whither the whole of the English army had withdrawn that very morning. It was only after crossing the river Dyle near Genappe that Uxbridge installed his batteries and again opened fire. Soon they were silenced by the French and the pursuit was resumed, but its pace was slackened: owing to the rain, the roads had become a torrent, and the fields a bog, where the horses waded knee-deep in mud.

At nightfall they reached the farm of Belle-Alliance situated upon a flat-topped mound, almost a hill of that name. Facing it was another hill with a similar top, Mont-Saint-Jean, on which Wellington had installed his strongly-fortified position. All this neighbourhood was known by the name of *Waterloo* after a small village lying in the rear of the English. A deep ravine ran between the two hillocks. Rolling fields covered with ripening corn stretched around as far as the eye could reach to the horizon; here and there were copses and woods, with tapering church spires rising above the villages: peaceful old Flanders. Over it all, there now hung a rainy evening's leaden pall.

The English cavalry rolled down into the ravine and managed to climb the slippery slope of Mont-Saint-Jean.

Napoleon halted. He ignored who was facing him: the English army or merely its rear-guard. He commanded trial shots to be fired, and by the manner in which the enemy batteries retaliated realized that at Mont-Saint-Jean he had before him the whole of the English army.

It is too late now to begin the battle, besides the main forces of the French have not yet arrived.

"I wish I could have stayed the sun like Joshua!" exclaimed the Emperor.[11]

The battle was postponed till the morrow, 18th June. He ordered the army to encamp around Belle-Alliance, while he himself put up for the night at a farm called Caillou, a clean little house recently looted and polluted by Braunschweiger troopers. A huge fire was lit for the Emperor to dry himself, for he had been drenched to the skin in the rain, "as after a shower-bath."

At 9 o'clock in the evening scouts brought information that Blücher was moving not to Liège, but to Wavre, *i.e.* was again endeavouring to effect a junction with Wellington. The news caused him no anxiety: how would Blücher, thirty-six hours after the rout at Ligny and with thirty thousand Frenchmen at his heels, have the temerity to risk a flank manoeuvre from Wavre to Mont-Saint-Jean? And even supposing that he had, how could a defeated army with a lowered *morale* accept fight?

That night the Emperor scarcely slept at all. He rose at 1 A.M. and again under pouring rain, alone with General Bertrand visited all the out-posts. He was haunted by the idea of Wellington's possible withdrawal. Peering through the curtain of rain, he strained eye and ear to catch a glimpse of camp fires or the sound of movement in the English bivouac. All, however, was dark and silent; the bivouac sound asleep.

Dawn was scarcely breaking when Napoleon returned

[11] Houssaye, *1815*.

to the farm. Here a letter from Grouchy awaited him. He wrote: "Blücher is advancing in two columns; one, apparently, is marching to Liège, the other to Wavre." Should this information be confirmed he, Grouchy, would start in pursuit in order to prevent his junction with Wellington. A fine fellow Grouchy, how different from "lethargic" Ney! The Emperor's doubts are set at rest to such an extent that he dispatches no further instructions to Grouchy: everything is as clear as that two and two make four. That, if Destiny so wills it, two and two may make five—he failed to remember. Alas, had he but known that the day before, that septuagenarian youth, Field-Marshal "Vorwärts" ("Forwards") groaning on his bed of straw from the pain in his old bones, had muttered: "Even if I have to be tied to my horse I will not miss the battle!" As is Blücher, the son, so is the mother—Prussia: she is all one "Forward" impulse; two and two for her now make five.

Officers sent to reconnoitre, as well as Belgian spies and deserters reported in the morning that Wellington's army had not budged. So there will be a battle and triumph, as certain as that two and two make four. A pale sun, in a cloudy sky—the resurrected sun of Austerlitz—"will illumine the destruction of England's army." [12]

There is one drawback, however: the enemy cannot be engaged at the hour appointed by the Emperor. The rain has ceased, but the mud is so thick that the artillery cannot be moved until it dries; and every hour of delay is so much gain to Blücher.

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[12] Houssaye, *1815.*

Napoleon paces the room in a fever of impatience; looks out of the window, consults the sky.

At 5 o'clock in the morning he orders the battle to begin at nine. Yet even by then, the troops have not occupied their allotted positions; some are still cleaning ammunition, others cooking soup.

"The English army is by more than a quarter numerically superior to ours; nevertheless, we have more than ninety chances for victory and less than ten against," declared Napoleon sitting down to breakfast at the farm with the generals of his staff.

Here Ney made his appearance, now no longer in a state of "lethargy"; he had roused himself already the day before at Quatre-Bras on realizing the mischief he had worked; he wears such a piteous crestfallen look, that the Emperor had not the heart to blame him according to his deserts.

"All the chances would be in our favour, Your Majesty, were Wellington such a fool as to wait for us," he said on entering and hearing the Emperor's words. "He is, however, on the point of retreating, and if you tarry to attack, will escape. . . ."

"You are mistaken. The time is gone for that; besides, even if he did—he is done for. The dice is thrown, and fortune favours us!" retorted Napoleon.

Marshal Soult the night before had counselled the Emperor to recall half of Grouchy's troops as there was a greater need of men here for the supreme encounter with the English army, so grimly tenacious and menacing was its aspect. To-day he repeated his advice.

"Because you were beaten by Wellington, you imagine him to be a great captain," the Emperor re-

plied wrathfully. "Wellington is an incompetent general, I tell you, and the English—bad soldiers. We'll as soon have done with them as we have of our breakfast!"

General Reille here entered the room. Napoleon questioned him on his opinion of the English.

"Very brave soldiers, Your Majesty! Their stand is so firm and their aim so sure, that to dislodge them by a frontal attack is impossible; perhaps a flank manoeuvre might succeed." [13]

Reille knew the English well since the Spanish war, whereas to Napoleon they were strangers; it were better, had he hearkened to Reille, but he did not: the same Invisible one, who yesterday had dimmed his insight on Grouchy, to-day stopped his ears to Reille's warning.

The sky cleared, the sun came out, a fresh breeze dried the mud on the roads. The artillery commanders reported that shortly the cannon could be moved.

Napoleon mounted his charger and commenced a review of the troops. "Never had men acclaimed him so lustily '*Vive l'Empereur.*' It bordered on frenzy. A particularly solemn and stirring note was added to these cheers by the presence—some thousand paces away—of the deep scarlet line of the English army," recalled an eye-witness.[14]

The French realized, as never before, that here, at this very moment, the fate of France, nay, that of the *Man* and of mankind itself hung in the balance.

By eleven the troops were not yet in formation. Napoleon ordered the attack to be launched at 1 P.M.

[13] Houssaye.
[14] Houssaye, *1815.*

Contrary to Reille's advice he determined not to manoeuvre but to make a frontal atack on the English centre with the object of breaking through and repulsing it beyond Mont-Saint-Jean, after which victory being assured—to act according to circumstances. He was now, as when a man of thirty in the hey-day of his glory, ready "to stake all for all." [15]

At a quarter past eleven he commanded a light preliminary attack on the chateau d'Hougoumont, an advanced English position in a wood at the bottom of the ravine.

The first cannon shot boomed out. English officers took out their watches and marked the time: it was half-past eleven.

Hougoumont is but the prelude to the battle, yet of so sanguinary a nature as to foreshadow what was coming. Simultaneously Napoleon is preparing the main attack: eighty cannons destined to bombard the English centre are installed in front and to the right of Belle-Alliance. Towards 1 P.M. Ney informs the Emperor that all is ready, and he himself awaiting the orders to begin. Before it becomes concealed in the smoke screen of the batteries, Napoleon casts a last look across the field of battle. Some ten kilometres to the northwest mid-way towards Wavre, he perceives something like a dark cloud emerging out of the wood of Saint-Lambert. Instantly he realizes what that is; nevertheless consults his staff officers. Opinion differs: some say, it is the wood, or the shadow of a cloud; others are inclined to think it a marching column in

[15] *Mémorial*, I.

French or Prussian uniforms. Soult purports clearly to discern a strong army corps.

A dim remembrance—foreboding grips the Emperor's heart: when and where did—*will* this happen? Here, now?—is it Blücher? No, not yet. This is not Blücher, a captured Prussian officer informs him, but a vanguard detachment under the Prussian general Bülow which is approaching Saint-Lambert. Napoleon hopes, or fain would hope, that it is only a corps and not the whole army. The prisoner had refrained from divulging that the whole of the army was advancing in Bülow's wake. "Bülow is preparing to attack our right wing," Napoleon writes to Grouchy: "Do not lose a moment, march to rejoin us, and together we shall surprise and crush Bülow." [16]

"This morning we had ninety chances in our favour; now they are sixty to forty; and if Grouchy rectifies his ghastly mistake and arrives quickly, our triumph will be all the more far-reaching because Bülow's army corps will also be destroyed," the Emperor tells Soult.[17]

The latter maintains a grim silence, although he might have reminded the Emperor of his wise counsel to recall one half of Grouchy's contingent.

At about 2 o'clock Napoleon gives Ney the order to attack. Half a day is lost, and yet every extra hour, nay, minute are so much Blücher's gain.

Four infantry divisions descend into the ravine at a run; the bulk of them remain there in front of Hougoumont still uncaptured, and a second English outpost, La Haye Sainte; while a smaller section scales the slip-

[16] Houssaye.
[17] *Ibid.*

pery incline of Mont-Saint-Jean and is already nearing the top; a few paces further to fortify the position and allow the cavalry to strike "the death-blow"—and victory is assured.[18] At that precise moment, a counter-attack of the English cavalry precipitates them all back into the ravine.

It is 3 o'clock. There is a lull in the fighting, as though the battle were resting and gathering strength.

Wellington's sole aim is to hold out till Blücher's arrival. The latter tarries, however, and at English headquarters it is feared that they will be incapable of withstanding a second attack.

The order for this is given by Napoleon at half-past three, and is prefaced by a bombardment of such terrific intensity "as the most seasoned veterans had never before experienced." [19] This second attack too failed: the billow rose, struck the rock and broke into spray. Reille was right: "To dislodge the English by a frontal attack is impossible; perhaps a manoeuvre might succeed." It is now, however, too late to manoeuvre.

To retrieve his defection at Quatre-Bras, Ney from the outset of the battle had planned a big cavalry charge under his own command. Without waiting for the Emperor's orders he hastily forms, at the bottom of the ravine, a detachment of five thousand cuirassiers, uhlans, and mounted *chasseurs* of the Guard and launches an attack on Mont-Saint-Jean. This billow too was hurled back into the ravine; it rose again and rolled up higher than any preceding one; already the French cuirassiers

[18] Houssaye.
[19] *Ibid.*

are galloping on the ridge of the hill, seizing the cannon, breaking through the enemy line.

"I am afraid we are done for," artillery Colonel Gould says to cavalry Captain Mercer.[20]

"Victory! Victory!" exclaimed the generals of the Emperor's suite. He, however, is angered and surprised that the best cavalry regiments should be thrown into the *mêlée* without his order.

"Ney acted too soon, it may finish badly," he says gazing intently at the field of battle; then adding after a short silence: "Yes, an hour too soon; well, there is no help for it, we must support him." And orders Kellerman's heavy horse to reinforce Ney.

Whether too soon or too late, he actually does not know himself, because the situation is every moment becoming more menacing. Two battles are actually in progress simultaneously: a frontal one against the English, and a flank engagement with the Prussians. Bülow is already at hand, has occupied the village of Plancenoit on the right wing of the French and is threatening to encircle their rear and thus cut off a way to retreat.

The Young Guard is barely able to hold its own. Still no change on Mont-Saint-Jean: wave after wave rolls up and breaks. This seems endless to the French, but the English know the end will come. "Our centre was bared; at no other phase of the battle had its issue appeared more doubtful," recalled an eye-witness.

Wellington's self-control is beginning to give way. "Either night or Blücher must come!" he mutters as he

[20] Houssaye.

watches the battle from his post beneath an ancient elm tree at the crossing of the Brussels and Ohain roads, whence he had not stirred since the fighting began. The commanding officers of the different units find him there to report on their desperate plight and ask what is to be done.

"Hold on!" replies Wellington.

Others run up with the same query.

"Hold on, hold on to the end!" [21]

Ney sees or feels by intuition, the English line waver; a handful of fresh troops might be sufficient to inflict a death-blow. He dispatches an aide-de-camp to the Emperor begging him to send a few infantry. "Infantry?" retorts the later: "Where from? Am I to make it?" [22]

Thus he had answered on the redoubt of Shevardino, when he had repulsed victory, as does a surfeited lover his mistress; not so did he speak at Arcola and Marengo. Suddenly the death spot of decay stood out black upon the luminous body of the resurrected.

Eight battalions of the Old Guard and six of the Middle still remained at his disposal. Had he at the time, spared half of them to reinforce Ney, "our centre would have been broken through," [23] is the testimony of the best English historian of the battle of Waterloo. It appears to Napoleon, however, that deprived of his cavalry reserves, he is barely able to defend his own positions with the whole of the Guard. For him, as for Wellington, it is the crucial moment. The Young Guard, hard pressed by Bülow, has already retreated;

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[21] Houssaye.
[22] Houssaye.
[23] Kennedy, *Notes of the Battle of Waterloo.*

Prussian cannon-balls are ploughing up the soil round Belle-Alliance; the right wing of the French is outflanked and their rear under menace.

The Emperor commands the eleven battalions of the Guard to form into as many squares, stations them along the Brussels road opposite Plancenoit and orders two battalions to dislodge the Prussians from the village. Twenty minutes later the village is captured.

It is a quarter past seven. The sunset is clear; there remains another two hours' daylight: they will decide everything.

Suddenly, the roar of cannon thunders from the north-east, the direction from which Bülow had made his appearance. It grows in volume, draws nearer, thunders at Limales at a distance of some twelve kilometres. At last, it is he, Grouchy! Fine fellow! He has not dawdled, but overtaken and engaged Blücher; whether or not he will be victorious, does not matter. At least he will arrest his progress and prevent his joining the English. The same hand which had so oft upheld Napoleon on the very brink of the abyss, will save him now.

The English lines are wavering—the French see it too. Wellington has thrown in his last reserves—or so the Emperor thinks, whereas his whole Guard, "the Invincibles," are intact. He commands the nine battalions stationed in square formation upon the Brussels road, to advance; he places himself at the head of the first and leads them for a final assault on La Haye Sainte at the bottom of the ravine, straight into the burning pit.

Half an hour earlier, when Ney had begged for reinforcements, this attack might have determined the whole issue of the battle. Now it comes too late. Wellington

has had time to rally and cheer his men: there is something happening out there upon the Ohain road, which he is aware of or espies, and which still remains concealed from the French by the hills at the back of Belle-Alliance.

But the Emperor, down at the bottom of the ravine, also sees: Blücher! So Grouchy has missed him after all! He failed to come and save. That same hand, which had but now borne Napoleon above the abyss, now pushed him into it. Yet his countenance is as calm as it was wont to be at Austerlitz and Marengo: it sufficed but to glance at it, for men to see triumph inscribed thereon.

He despatches his aides-de-camp to spread the joyful news all along the line: "Grouchy is here—we are safe!" And men, knowing the truth, believe in the falsehood. "*Vive l'Empereur!*" they shout with a fervour which drowns the cannon's roar. The wounded and the dying raise themselves to cheer. An old veteran of Marengo, sitting by the road-side, his legs smashed into pulp by a cannon-ball, encourages the marching columns in a loud and firm voice:

"It's all right, boys, forward march, and *Vive l'Empereur!*" [24]

Within the burning pit, between Hougoumont and La Haye Sainte, five battalions, alone against the whole English army are marching in step, bayonet to bayonet, calm and majestic as if on the parade ground of the Tuileries. All the generals, with Ney and Friant at their head are foremost under fire. Ney falls with his horse—

[24] Houssaye.

it is the fifth shot under him; he jumps up and continues on foot, with drawn sword.

The English batteries are raking the advancing columns from a distance of three hundred yards, from front and flank with double volleys of grape-shot. After each volley a gap yawns in the battalions. But the men close the ranks more firmly, the squares become narrower, and still they march on with the war cry: "*Vive l'Empereur!*" The English are standing firm—mindful of Wellington's command to "Hold on to the end!" [25]

"Who holds out longest, wins!" mutters an old English soldier biting at a cartridge.

Already two French battalions have climbed the ridge of Mont-Saint-Jean without encountering the enemy. Suddenly, not twenty paces ahead, a dark scarlet wall—the English Guards—rose up before them. The men had lain concealed in the corn, and at the command of "Up, Guard, and at them!" sprang up as if propelled by springs; they take aim, fire. . . . At the first volley three hundred men are mown down, nearly half of the two battalions already disseminated by the previous grape-shot. They halt, impeded by the killed and wounded. Instead of commanding a bayonet attack, the officers are reforming the ranks, and so for ten minutes the men stand exposed to a double grape-shot and rifle fire; then slowly retreat.

Seeing the Guard waver, Wellington commands a general attack. Heads lowered, bayonets fixed, the English rush at this handful of Frenchmen, overthrow them and roll down into the ravine in a hand-to-hand scrim-

[25] Houssaye.

mage. "Men were so interlocked with one another that firing became impossible," writes an eye-witness.[26]

"The Guard is retreating!" the cry resounds along the French lines like the death knell of the Great Army.

At this very instant Blücher's army corps emerges upon the Ohain road and hurls itself against the French. "Treason! Run for your lives!" the shout is raised, and there is a stampede. Undoubtedly there is treason! The Emperor himself has said "Grouchy," and, behold, Blücher!

Wellington means to deal a final blow to this mortally wounded army. He rides to the front upon the brow of the hill, raises his hat and waves it above his head. The troops understood the signal. As one man, battalions, batteries, squadrons of all divisions precipitate themselves forward, trampling the dead and wounded under their horses' hoofs, and gun-carriages. From right wing to left, English, Prussians, drums rolling, bugles and trumpets sounding, are pouring in a torrent in the deepening dusk, down into the ravine.

The French are in flight towards Belle-Alliance. English hussars and dragoons are in hot pursuit, hacking at them with their swords. "No quarter! No quarter!" they shout as if demented.

The Emperor, seeing all, sees nothing. His countenance is immovable, somnambulic as if in lethargic sleep: he slept, awoke and again fell asleep; was dead, came to life, and died again.

His soul is sleeping but the body is alert and moving.

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[26] Houssaye.

He forms the last three battalions into three squares at the bottom of the ravine, two hundred yards from La Haye Sainte. The one to the right—upon the Brussels road, is to form a rampart under cover of which the army might rally and withdraw. He himself is on horseback in the centre of the square. His dead soul is animated by one single living thought: "To die, to die now, here, at once, on the field of battle!" [27] All around him, in front and behind—everywhere men are dropping dead, yet he is safe. Someone keeps guard over him. Wherefore?

Here too, by the roadside is Ney, on foot, hatless, impossible to recognize, his face blackened by gunpowder, his tunic in tatters, one epaulette slashed by a sabre-cut; furiously brandishing a fragment of his sword he shouts to Count d'Erlon, who is carried along in the stream of fugitives:

"If we remain alive, d'Erlon, we'll be hung!"

He rallies the fugitives and again dashes with them into the fray.

"Here, men, see how a Marshal of France can die!"

Around him all are slain, and still he clings to the field of battle seeking a death that will not come.[28]

The three battalions of the Guard still stand, under a storm of grape-shot from front, rear and both flanks. At last the Emperor issues the command to retreat. They do so slowly, step by step, no longer in a square—too few are left, but in triangles with bayonets crossed fighting their way through the enemy, surrounded on all sides, like a wild boar tracked by hounds.

[27] O'Meara, II.
[28] Houssaye.

The contact with the enemy is at such short range that above the din of the shots, voices can be heard calling from front to front.

"Surrender! Surrender!" shout the English. Incensed by these cries, General Cambronne retaliates with a foul expletive.

"M. . . . !"

And struck by a bullet in the forehead, drops dead.[29]

Cambronne's expletive summarizes the whole meaning of Waterloo. Napoleon was defeated by Wellington and Blücher. What does it mean?

"Apart from war, Wellington has no two ideas in his head." [30] Neither has Blücher many more. Wellington knows he must "hold on"; but on to what? England or English plutocracy—this he know not. Blücher, too, knows it is necessary to move "forward," but whither and what for—for Prussia or Prussian *Spitzruten*—he likewise does not know.

Napoleon, the Man, was inspired by the most sublime of human ideals—universal peace, the fraternal comity of nations, the kingdom of God on earth. Granted that he was ignorant of how to achieve this idea; granted that his road to Paradise lay through Hell; still, the idea itself was sublime, and the triumph over him of Wellington and Blücher is the defeat of human sense by non-sense. Waterloo determined the destinies of the world, and if this solution is final, then the world deserves not Napoleon, the Man, but human refuse—"M. . . . !"

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[29] Houssaye, *1815.*
[30] Mme. de Staël, *Mémoires,* IV.

That night the Emperor watched for the retreating troops beside a camp fire lit by some grenadiers of the Old Guard upon a woody clearing near Quatre-Bras. He stood with arms folded, motionless as a statue, his eyes fixed on Waterloo. One of the fugitive officers approached him saying:

"Do not stay here, Your Majesty, you are without cover."

The Emperor remained unheeding as though he heard nothing. And the officer peering in his face, saw that he was weeping.[31]

The dead do not weep: so he is alive—come to life once more. Nor do even the living weep over great calamities: therefore neither is this calamity overwhelming.

Next morning he writes from Philippeville to his brother Joseph in Paris: "The battle is lost, but there is still hope. If I call up all my reserves and the National Guard, I may muster 300,000 men. . . . But I must be helped, not hindered. . . . I trust the deputies, realizing their duty, will rally round me to save France." [32] This signifies that Waterloo is no great calamity. "The lightning merely grazed but did not smash his soul."

In the evening of the 20th June, on the journey from Philippeville to Paris, Napoleon's carriage stopped in the courtyard of the postal inn at Laon, and the Emperor got out. Onlookers from the street could see him through the open gates, pacing up and down, with head bent and arms folded on his breast. The courtyard was strewn with heaps of refuse from the stables. Someone in the

[31] Houssaye.
[32] Houssaye.

crowd of onlookers in the street murmured in an awe-struck whisper:

"Job among the ashes!" [33]

"Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!"

This Napoleon will never say, for he knows not Whom to say it to. Yet a wonderful serenity and peace have filled his soul. "You may not believe it, but I do not regret my grandeur; you see me slightly affected by what I have lost," he said later at St. Helena; [34] and "Job among the ashes" might have said so too.

He understood now, *remembered* that life is but a dream, ever repeating itself throughout eternity; life's cycle is like that of the sun: dawn, sunrise, noon, eventide, sunset—night.

[33] Job.
[34] *Mémorial,* III.

NIGHT

FROM WATERLOO TO DEATH

I

THE SECOND ABDICATION

1815

". . . What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" These words might well stand as a motto to the Napoleonic *night*.

All these last years, as during his whole lifetime, he never gave a thought to his soul; it might be said that he never once reminded himself of its existence. But that soul of his was mindful of itself and its salvation, independently of and in spite of himself.

That the soul of man—his "heart"—at times rebels against and wrestles with him, was known to those wise children, the ancient Egyptians. "Rise not against me, O my heart, the heart of my mother, bear not witness against me," thus speaks the deceased at the last judgment of Osiris, when his heart is being weighed in the immutable balance. This means, that the Heart of Man or rather his Soul is a separate entity from him, a kind of deity which lives within him; and woe to man, when it rises against him.

It fell to Napoleon's lot to know this woe.

"What stakes shall we play for? I warn you I refuse

to stake my soul," the gambler Lugin, in Lermontov's story,[1] tells the ghost of the old usurer.

" 'I have this in my bank,' replies the ghost.

" 'This'? repeated Lugin trembling: 'What is it?' "

"Beside him a dim transparent white form was swaying. . . . A vision of divine loveliness: a woman's exquisite face was bending over his shoulder, her lips were moving in prayer, sorrow unspeakable lay in her deep and lustrous eyes; the slender figure shone against the dark walls of the room like the morning star against the eastern sky."

"A star." Lermontov, who in many ways was a kindred spirit to Napoleon, had found the right word for it. Man's soul separated from him, a kind of deity existing within and above him, his super-terrestrial fate, is that "Star"—Napoleon's Destiny.

"I want to be beloved by five hundred million men," he had dreamed at the summit of his power and glory.[2]

"Thou foolish man!"—thus might he, the wisest of men, be answered by that still wiser soul of his: "What shall it profit thee, if thou shalt gain the whole world, and lose thine own soul? If all mankind love thee and thyself lovest no one?"

He himself used to say, "Do not think my heart is less susceptible than other people's. I am even kind hearted; but from my earliest childhood I suppressed that part of my soul, and now it lies dormant." [3]

Dormant maybe, but not dead: it has awakened,

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[1] Lermontov, *Fragment of an Unfinished Tale,* 1841.
[2] Roederer.
[3] Fournier, *Napoléon,* III.

risen against him and commenced to destroy him in order to save itself.

"I offer myself as a sacrifice, *je m'offre en sacrifice*," these words out of Napoleon's second act of abdication, so incongruous and stupendous when coming from him, are also a motto to his "night." It is as if they are uttered not by him, but by his super-terrestrial fate, his Soul-Star. To win it he stakes his all in the gamble against that "old usurer"—Destiny.

Three days after Waterloo, at 8 o'clock on the morning of the 21st June, the Emperor returned to Paris, to the palace of the Elysée. He appeared utterly exhausted; his face looked waxen with sunken cheeks and lustreless eyes.

"I cannot bear it any longer. . . . Give me two hours' rest. . . . I feel stifled!" . . . he said clutching at his chest, and addressing the Minister for Foreign Affairs Caulaincourt, who met him as he descended from his carriage.

"Ah, destiny, destiny! Three times did victory slip through my fingers. . . . Still, even now, everything is not lost. . . . I will find men and munitions. . . . Everything may yet right itself." [4]

Having had a hot bath, he proceeded direct to the Council of Ministers.

After delivering a brief survey of the campaign, he spoke as follows:

"Our situation is extremely perilous. I have returned in order to inspire the nation with the spirit of noble and sublime self-sacrifice. . . . Let but France arise, and the enemy will be destroyed. . . . To save the father-

[4] Houssaye, *1815*, III.

land, I need great powers, a provisional dictatorship. I might have seized them of my own accord, in the name of the common weal; but it were greater national statesmanship to receive them from the Chamber." [5]

The ministers maintained a grim silence; when questioned separately, their answers were evasive.

"Tell me frankly, do the deputies desire my abdication?" the Emperor asked.

"I am afraid so, Your Majesty," replied a deputy of the Chamber, Garraud, a nominee of Fouché the Minister of Police.

"If the Chamber refuses its assistance to the Emperor, he will manage without it!" exclaimed Napoleon's brother Lucien.

The Emperor then addressed the Council: "I hope that the presence of the enemy upon French soil will make the deputies realize their duty. In electing me the people wished me to be supported, not deposed. . . . I do not fear them. . . . I have but to say a word—and they will all be killed. I fear nothing for myself, but everything for France. If we quarrel, she is lost. Whereas the nation's patriotism and hatred of the invader coupled with its love for me, might become a source of great strength. . . ."

Followed the plan of a new campaign outlined with a brilliance which made the Ministers hold their breath and forget Waterloo; once more Napoleon "the god of war, the god of victory" arose before them.

"He is not a man, but a devil," Fouché told his new friends—the Royalists, a few hours hence: "He alarmed

[5] *Ibid.*

me to-day; it appeared to me, when listening to him, as if he would start everything afresh. Fortunately one cannot begin over again!" [6]

While the men at the Elysée talked, those in the Chamber acted. A motion was carried: "The Chamber declares its session to be permanent and any attempt at its dissolution—a crime of state, and anyone who attempts to do so a traitor to the fatherland."

Napoleon understood what that meant.

"I ought to have dissolved them before my departure for the front; now it is all over; they will ruin France!" he said on that same day at the second meeting of the Council of Ministers, adding softly as though to himself:

"I will abdicate, if necessary."

That evening he and Lucien came out into the palace gardens, separated from the street by a moat with a low dilapidated wall.

"*Vive l'Empereur!* To arms, to arms!" the crowd in the street kept shouting ceaselessly.

"Do you hear them?" said Lucien: "It is the voice of the people. Say but the word, and your enemies will fall. It is the same all over France. Will you sacrifice her to those traitors?"

Napoleon waved a greeting to the crowd, then turning to Lucien said:

"Am I more than an ordinary man to be capable of restoring this demented Chamber to the unity which alone can save us, or am I a contemptible party leader to stir up civil war? No, never! On the 18th Brumaire we drew our sword for the weal of France; now, for

[6] Houssaye, *1815*, III.

the same cause we must cast it far from us. I am ready for everything for France's sake—I desire nothing for myself." [7]

On Lucien leaving him, Napoleon was rejoined by Benjamin Constant the father of "Benjamine," that stillborn constitution which now served to depose the Emperor. As he listened to the roar of the crowds Constant was terrified lest Napoleon, to save himself, should stir up a second Revolution more disastrous than the first.

For a long time Napoleon stood silently watching the crowd.

"Do you see these people?" he articulated at last: "It is not upon such as they that I showered gold and honours. I leave them as I found them—destitute. But theirs is the right instinct, the voice of the people. Were such my desire, the rebellious Chamber would be swept away within an hour. . . . But one human life is not worth such a price. I do not wish to become a Jacquerie king. I did not return from Elba to flood the streets of Paris with blood. . . ." [8]

What does he mean by this? He means that the first Revolution, a political one, is ended; and a second —a social one, is or may be in embryo. The first was made by the bourgeoisie; the second will be accomplished by the mob, "*la canaille*," as it was then called, the "proletariat" as we say to-day. "The mob alone is noth-

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[7] Lucien Bonaparte, *La Verité sur les Cent Jours.* Houssaye, *1815*, III.

[8] Houssaye.

ing and can accomplish nothing; with me it is all-powerful," Napoleon was wont to say.[9]

The moat round the garden of the Elysée, beyond which the crowds were surging, marked the boundary between these two Revolutions, two ages—aeons. Will he step across, or will he also say of the revolution what he said of war: "never has it seemed so abhorrent to me?"

Possibly, he may have recalled at this moment, how a quarter of a century ago on the 10th August 1792, on his way to the Place du Carrousel he encountered a group of men "of mean aspect," carrying a human head on a pike, and who forced him to shout: "Long live the people!" He may have realized that the "rabble" of to-day was more terrible than the first one; the younger She-Wolf of Revolution more ferocious than the old which he, the Wolf-Cub, had done to death; were he to try his strength against this one, who knows which would prove the stronger of the two?

Next day, the 22nd, Lucien endeavoured to persuade his brother to repeat the 18th Brumaire and disperse the Chamber with bayonets.

"No, my dear Lucien, although on the 18th Brumaire our rights were based solely on the good of the people, whereas now we are invested with full rights, we ought not to use them. . . ."

Then, after a brief silence, he said:

"Prince Lucien, sit down and write. . . ."

Suddenly turning to Fouché with a mocking smile

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[9] Gourgaud, I.

which made him writhe like a reptile pierced by an arrow, he added:

"By the way, you may also write to these good people not to worry—they'll get their due!"

Lucien sat down and took up a quill, but at the first sentence dictated by his brother crushed the quill on the paper, jumped up and overturning the chair, went to the door.

"Stay!" the Emperor uttered in such a commanding voice that Lucien involuntarily obeyed, turned back and once more sat down. Dead silence prevailed save for the distant shouts reaching out from beyond the wall: "*Vive l'Empereur!*" This is what he dictated: "In beginning the war for France's independence, I expected that all the national authorities would unite with me in a common will and effort and had cause to hope for success. Circumstances, however, are changed, and I *offer myself as a sacrifice* to the hate of the enemies of France—provided they are sincere in their affirmations and desire harm to myself alone. Therefore, all unite together to save France and remain a free people!"

His son was forgotten. When reminded of him, he added: "I proclaim my son Napoleon II, Emperor of the French. I invite the Chamber to establish a regency, according to the law." [10]

All Paris was in a ferment. Crowds of workmen paraded the streets singing revolutionary songs. The news of the abdication added fuel to the fire. The shouts: "To arms! To arms!" became more and more menacing.

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[10] Houssaye, *1815,* III.

Officers of the Great Army mingled with the crowds.

"We'll march to the Chamber in battalions to claim our Emperor, and if we don't get him, we'll set fire to Paris from four quarters!" they threatened.

"Never had the people manifested so great a love for Napoleon," recalled an eye-witness.[11]

The people, feeling instinctively that the abdication would deprive those who wished to defend their country of leadership, wanted to save France as in 1793. "The mob with Napoleon is all-powerful," this Fouché too was well aware of and panic-stricken hastened to remove him out of Paris.

On the 24th June, the Chamber moved "a request to the Emperor to quit the capital." He agreed to retire to Malmaison, a couple of hours' drive from Paris, and set out furtively as if in flight on the 25th in order to escape being noticed by the crowds besieging the palace.

To remain in France was impossible. His first thought was to seek refuge in England: to place his trust in the honour of his worst enemies—he deemed this a sublime consummation worthy of his great destiny. It was with the utmost difficulty that his followers dissuaded him from this idea and prevailed upon him to take flight to America.

Aware that two French frigates the *Saal* and *Meduse* lay in the harbour of Rochefort ready to put out to sea, he requested them to be placed at his disposal for the voyage. Fouché, however, who intended to use the head of the Emperor as ransom in bargaining with the Allies, was in no haste to let him out of France. General Beker

[11] Houssaye, *1815*, III.

was despatched to Malmaison ostensibly to guard, but in reality secretly to spy upon Napoleon.

Napoleon lingered on at Malmaison in the vain expectation of obtaining a response to his request for the frigates, probably for the first time in his life in complete idleness. In this deserted castle, in which he had spent the best years of his life, the sweet delusions of memory flooded his soul. He re-lived again the rising sun of the Consulate, the noon-tide, evening and sunset of the Empire; he recalled his poor departed Josephine.

When Paris capitulated to the Allies on the 29th March 1814, Josephine, her diamonds and pearls sewn up in her padded jacket, fled distractedly from the Russian Cossacks. Later, however, she picked up courage to return to Malmaison, there to await the good graces of the Bourbons and the Allies. Napoleon was seemingly forgotten. Russians, Austrians, English, Prussians—all France's conquerors—were welcome guests at Malmaison; particularly the Emperor Alexander. Imagining him to be not indifferent to her charms, she flirted with him, tried to make herself look young again, dressed in white muslin like a girl of seventeen, never suspecting that already she was standing upon the brink of the grave.

On the 22nd May she caught a chill—a cold and slightly sore throat. She took no notice of it, danced at a ball with the Emperor Alexander and the King of Prussia and feeling warm walked out into the garden in her thin dress; quinsy ensued. On the 28th she was *in extremis* and at noon on the 29th, without recovering consciousness, Josephine was no more.

She left nothing in the world except a debt of three

million francs for perfumes, rouge, creams, gloves, corsets, laces, hats and furbelows.

Shortly before her death, when still in apparently good health and spirits, she once pronounced words of singularly—for her—deep meaning: "at times it seems to me as if I were dead, and only a dim consciousness remains that I no longer exist." [12] Perhaps she never did: had mere vapour for a soul like Adam's first wife, Lilith.

No one took the trouble to inform Napoleon of her demise. He learnt of it when at Elba from a chance copy of an old newspaper. "He seemed deeply affected, and shut himself up in his room." [13]

On his return to Paris he immediately summoned Horeau, the physician who attended Josephine and began questioning him:

"What did she die of?"

"Sorrow."

"Over what?"

"Over all that happened, over Your Majesty's misfortunes."

"Dear woman! Dear, kind Josephine! She loved me indeed." [14]

He, who was able to face truth more squarely than any other man, was equally prone to self-deception.

So once again he surrendered himself to the sweet delusion of memories, while the spreading elms and beeches of Malmaison stood dreaming in the soft dusk

[12] Lacour-Gayet.
[13] Masson, *Josephine repudiée.*
[14] *Ibid.*

of the summer night, and the still waters of the lakes with the white ghost-like shapes of the sleeping swans, reflected the starry heavens above, and the dying soul of the roses exhaled itself in perfume.

"My poor Josephine!" he murmured, as he wandered slowly about the gardens: "I cannot reconcile myself to living here without her. I always expect to see her coming out from among the trees and plucking one of these roses she was so fond of. . . . She was the most charming woman I ever knew!" [15]

Meanwhile, Fouché the head of the Provisional Government, was wriggling between the Allies, the Bourbon, Bonaparte and revolutionary Paris, like a flexible vertebræless reptile. He informed Wellington of Napoleon's decision to go to America under the guise of asking for a permit, but in reality to provide the English with an opportunity for tightening the naval blockade in order to prevent his escape from France.

Thrice in the course of three days did the Emperor renew his request for the frigates. The reply came at last: the ships would be available but would not weigh anchor until the arrival of the permit.

Napoleon realized this was a trap. "I will not go to Rochefort, until I am certain I can sail at once," he replied to Fouché.[16] Of the two prisons he preferred Malmaison; here he was closer to his last refuge—the army.

The permit, of course, was refused by Wellington.

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[15] Houssaye.
[16] Houssaye, *1815.*

The Allied Commissionaries announced to the French envoys that "desirous forever to deprive Napoleon Bonaparte of the possibility of disturbing the peace of Europe and France, the Powers demand his delivery into their custody." [17]

The most moderate of the Allied diplomats contemplated either the Emperor's life-long imprisonment in some continental fortress or his deportation to a distant island. Lord Liverpool proposed to "hand over Bonaparte to the French king, in order that he might deal with him as with a rebel." Blücher, deeming himself "an instrument of Divine Providence" wanted either to shoot or hang him before the ranks of the Prussian army and thereby render a service to humanity." [18] Fouché, meanwhile, continued to bargain with the head of the Emperor, offering it as the price of an armistice in turn to England or Austria, while at the same time endeavouring to lure him out of the trap of Malmaison into the securer one of Rochefort.

On the 28th June there arrived at Malmaison the commander of the third legion of the National Guard with the news of the Prussians' approach to the castle. Simultaneously General Beker received from the War Minister Davout an urgent order to burn the bridges across the Seine in order to cut off the enemy's approaches to the castle, as Blücher was on the point of despatching a detachment to capture the Emperor.

Alarm spread in the castle.

"If I see that the Emperor is bound to fall into the

[17] Houssaye, *1815.*
[18] Houssaye, *1815.*

hands of the Prussians, I will shoot him!" exclaimed a member of his suite, General Gourgaud.[19]

Still more alarmed were Fouché and Davout. Blücher was approaching Paris, where an army of eighty thousand men was athirst for battle and aflame with such an heroic spirit that the generals had no doubt whatever, the Prussians would be beaten. What if Napoleon should want to place himself at the head of the army, or worse still it should itself march to fetch him from Malmaison? This idea so terrified Fouché that he decided at last to allow Napoleon to quit France.

Early on the morning of the 29th, General Beker informed the Emperor of the Provisional Government's decision to place the two frigates at Rochefort at his disposal, without waiting for the English permit.

The Prussian cavalry was approaching Malmaison. The departure had to be hastened; the Emperor agreed to start that very day.

As he stood conversing with the Postmaster General Lavalette concerning the movements of the enemy, loud clamours arose proceeding from the high road beyond the park. "What is this?" asked Napoleon, and when told that a French regiment of the line, passing the castle to occupy positions on the heights of Saint-Germain, wished thus to acclaim him, seemed affected. After a moment's reflection, he stooped over a war-map, on which the disposition of the French and enemy troops was marked by pins; he changed several, then raising his head, said:

"France must not be conquered by a handful of Prus-

[19] Houssaye, *1815*.

sians. I can still check the enemy's advance and give the government time to start negotiations with the Powers."

He rapidly left the room, and re-appeared in a few minutes, wearing the full dress uniform of a general of the *chasseurs* of the Old Guard, in top boots with spurs, with sword at his side and cocked hat under his arm. He seemed to have grown young again: the melancholy captive was the Emperor once more.

He turned to Beker: "General," he said, "the plight of France, the will of the patriots, the acclamations of the soldiers—all claim my presence in the army. I entrust you to inform the government of my request to be given the command not as an Emperor but as a plain general, whose name and fame may still greatly influence France's destinies. I swear by my honour as a soldier, citizen and Frenchman, to retire to America as soon as the enemy is repulsed!" [20]

General Beker possessed the heart of a soldier. Napoleon's words buoyed up his hopes. He immediately galloped off to Paris animated with a sincere desire for success.

"What, is the man mocking us?" shouted Fouché in a fury, when Beker transmitted to him Napoleon's request: "As if we did not know how he would keep his promise, supposing we were inclined to accept it. Away with him, out of France!"

It was the parting kick of the ass to the expiring lion.

"These men know not what they do," the Emperor

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[20] *Ibid.*

remarked calmly, on hearing of Fouché's refusal: "There is nothing left for me to do, but go." [21]

Again he left the room, took off his uniform, donned a brown surtout, then ordering the apartment where Josephine had died to be opened, he entered it locking himself up alone for a few moments. On coming out, he received the officers of the palace guard.

"We feel we shall no longer have the happiness to die for Your Majesty. . . ." One of them commenced a farewell speech, but unable to continue burst into tears. Silently, the Emperor embraced him.

The carriage was at the door. Napoleon got in and started for Rochefort.

[21] Houssaye, *1815.*

II

THE *BELLEROPHON*

"Come, my pretty Polly, walk into your cage, dear!" a silly old woman called to her parrot who had flown out into the garden. Perched on a tree top the parrot in no hurry to obey the call merely cocked his eye and screamed: "Polly is a fool!" It was no fool, however, for it refused to re-enter its cage.

This story invariably occurs to anyone trying to understand the cause which prompted Napoleon to surrender to the English.

"A schoolboy would have been more astute than myself. *Un écolier eut été plus habile que moi*," he used to say when already a prisoner.[1] Yes, indeed, a schoolboy would have shown greater cunning than this "astute politician." "Polly the fool" is cleverer than he, the most intelligent of men.

The criterion here lies in that the measure of man is above that of mere intellect. Had not Napoleon reached a state of frenzy, he never would have achieved his full measure—that of the *Man*.

"I offer myself as a sacrifice. . ." In uttering these words he possibly did not realize their full portent; when he did and was horror-struck, it was too late: the pledge

[1] Arthur Lévy.

once given, the deed is done: "I always do as I say or die."

"Sacrifice," this was what his super-terrestrial Destiny, that "Star" his Soul separated from and risen against him, had lured him with. Whether he will or no, he is now bound to follow her, the wise one's, call.

Sacrifice is one temptation, honour the other. "Napoleon possessed the sense of military honour in a supreme degree. . . . This astute politician was a soldier, a knight without fear or reproach," testifies one of his best historians.[2]

Napoleon possesses an outstanding knowledge of human nature, sees through men and his opinion of them is none too favourable: "Men must be exceedingly base to be such as I think they are," he was wont to say.[3]

To deceive such a man would seemingly be difficult. Nay, it is easy, because like a true knight he possesses childlike simplicity and confidence. Strange to say, there lives in Napoleon something of the Don Quixote, the eternal romanticist worshipping the Dulcinea of his dreams. Men would be unable to deceive him, unless by his own free will; more often than not, he willed it should be so, perhaps because of his extraordinarily keen insight into the bitter truths of human nature.

The insane knight-errantry of the idea of surrendering himself to the English, of honourably placing his trust in the honour of his arch-enemies, had always attracted him. He always knew—*remembered* that it would be so.

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[2] Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre,* I.

[3] "Ils faudrait que les hommes fussent bien scélérats pour l'être autaut que je le suppose."

As a lad of seventeen, Bonaparte wrote in his diary the tale of Baron Neuhof, an Austrian adventurer, who in 1737 proclaimed himself Theodor I King of Corsica, was arrested by the English, imprisoned in the Tower and liberated by Lord Walpole many years later. "How unjust is mankind! I wanted to make my people happy and for one brief moment I succeeded; but fate was fickle to me, I am a prisoner and surely you despise me," Theodor writes to Walpole, who replies: "You suffer, you are unfortunate: this is sufficient to give you a right to the compassion of the English people." [4]

"Dearly have I paid for my romantic opinion of you, *messieurs les Anglais!*" These words uttered by Napoleon at St. Helena appear as a fitting epilogue to the unfinished story of his childish days.[5]

In that same diary he writes four words: "*Sainte-Hélène—petite isle. . . .*" The rest of the page is blank. He fills it now. . . .

Crowds flocked to catch a glimpse of him all along the route from Malmaison to Rochefort, running after his carriage with the ceaseless cry: "*Vive l'Empereur!*" as on his return from Elba. Only now, knowing that he was about to quit France, they implored sobbing, "Stay, stay, do not forsake us!" [6]

At Niort the 2nd regiment of hussars very nearly mutinied insisting that he should take over the command and lead them to Paris.

Had he so willed, the miracle of Elba might have re-

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[4] Masson, *Manuscrits de Napoléon.*
[5] O'Meara, I.
[6] Houssaye, *1815.*

peated itself; but he was past any desires; his Soul, for him, craved for another miracle, more sublime.

He arrived on the 3rd July at Rochefort, where according to the testimony of a Royalist spy, "he was acclaimed as a god." [7] Both frigates, the *Saal* and *Meduse*, lay in harbour ready for sailing but unable to put out, because the English cruiser Bellerophon blockaded the outlet.

A naval war council was summoned at which a plan for flight was laid. Two French corvettes under command of Captain Baudin rode at anchor in the estuary of the Gironde.

"I know Baudin of old. He is the only man who can be trusted to convey His Majesty safely and well to America," said Vice-Admiral Martin, an old and faithful follower of Napoleon's.

Napoleon consented to this plan, and had it been immediately carried out—he might have been saved. But he waited; two or three days passed and still he dallied. Thinking he disapproved of this plan they submitted to him another. A small 50-ton Danish schooner, *Magdalaine* now lying in Rochefort harbour, and loading gin, would take the Emperor on board with four members of his retinue; in the emergency of a search, he could hide in an empty barrel.

Napoleon agreed to this too and even ordered the consignment of gin to be purchased, as though unconcerned by history's verdict, if as a climax to twenty years of warfare, he were discovered by Englishmen concealed in an empty barrel.

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[7] Houssaye, *1815*.

While Napoleon dallied, Fouché hurried. After the surrender of Paris on the 4th July, he had a great terror lest the Emperor should seize the command of the army.

"Put him on board the frigate at once even if necessary by force," Fouché wrote to General Beker. "Put him on board," but do not "take him away." He intended keeping him on board ship as a hostage.

On the 8th July Beker waited on the Emperor and implored him to come to a decision as his sojourn at Rochefort was becoming dangerous.

"Still, general, whatever happens you will not have the courage to betray me?" the Emperor asked smiling.

"Your Majesty is aware that I am ready to lay down my life for your safety; but in the event of a change of government I shall be powerless."

"All right; have ready boats to take us to the island of Aix. It is close to the frigates and I shall go on board with the first favourable breeze."

Sailors held out the slender hope that given a strong land breeze, the frigates might put out to sea, albeit at great risk. That same day Napoleon embarked on a boat from the fishing bay of Fouras. A crowd of awe-struck old fishermen and mariners stood silently round. No sooner had the oarsmen pushed off, than a despairing cry of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" drowned the roar of the breakers. "We sobbed like girls," one of the spectators recalled afterwards.

The Emperor ordered them to steer not to Aix, as at first intended, but to the frigate *Saal*. He spent two days on board. The *Bellerophon* lay in full view of the frigate. The temptation waxed stronger. For two days the Emperor struggled against it; on the third he

despatched the Duke of Rovigo and Count de Las Cases with the ostensible mission of enquiring whether there was any hope of obtaining a permit, or if not whether the *Bellerophon* would prevent his sailing without one. The secret object of the mission was to find out the actual intentions concerning him and what sort of reception he might expect were he to come on board the English cruiser.

Captain Maitland, in command of the *Bellerophon* received the delegates but gave an evasive answer to their request: he professed to be in complete ignorance with regard both to the permit or the intentions of his government; however, should the frigates put out to sea, he would attack; likewise he would search all the French and neutral mercantile craft and should Napoleon be discovered on board, he would place him under arrest pending the decision of his chief, Admiral Hotham.

Both Las Cases and Rovigo endeavoured to persuade Maitland of the Emperor's intention to emigrate to America, there to end his days in peace far from all politics.

"If that is so, why does he not seek shelter in England?"

This reply tallied exactly with the Frenchmen's desires, though they took good care to conceal it. To find out what was meant by a "shelter" they feigned surprise and raised objections to the effect that England's cold and damp climate would be unsuitable for the Emperor and also that living so close to France would invariably expose him to suspicions of plotting to return; finally that he was accustomed to regard Englishmen

as his arch-enemies and himself to be treated by them as an "ogre bereft of all human qualities." Here Maitland, if only for politeness' sake, felt obliged to assure them that English opinion of Napoleon was not quite as bad as that and that he had nothing to fear. Here the conversation ended.[8]

The delegates on their return informed the Emperor that in spite of his courtesy, no good was to be expected of Captain Maitland. The rumour of Napoleon's alleged surrender to the English excited great commotion among the frigates' officers and crew. Captain Ponée, commander of the *Meduse* thought of a new plan.

"To-night, after dark the *Meduse* sailing ahead of the *Saal* will make a surprise attack on the *Bellerophon* and engage her in a board to board combat thus preventing her from moving. . . . I will certainly be able to hold out for a couple of hours; my frigate will be badly damaged, but owing to the land breeze the *Saal* will have time to put out to sea."

He well knew he was dooming the frigate and probably himself and the whole crew to almost certain death. The Emperor was deeply moved.

To carry out Ponée's plan the consent of the senior officer in command of both frigates was necessary. This at first was granted, then withdrawn—for fear of Fouché.

As nothing could be expected from the frigates, the Emperor decided to land on the island of Aix.

The crew were in despair. Men wept, smote their

[8] Houssaye, *1815*.

faces with their fists, threw down and trampled on their caps in a rage.

"I wanted to save him!" exclaimed Ponée. "He does not know the English. The unfortunate man is lost." [9]

Six subalterns—mere lads—of the 14th naval company billeted at Aix proposed yet another plan. Two luggers, two-masted pontoon sloops lying in Rochefort harbour would pick up the Emperor with two or three members of his suite and skirting the coast would make their way in the darkness to La Rochelle, thence to the open sea, where they would charter the first met trading vessel to take the fugitives to America.

Napoleon not wishing to grieve these brave lads consented or feigned to consent. In his innermost thoughts, however, he had come to a definite decision. When so much self-sacrifice was manifested all around him, he too was at last beginning to grasp the meaning of "sacrifice." He might still, like Lermontov's gambler, be saying to his usurer—Destiny: "I refuse to stake my soul"—but already he had staked it.

On the evening of the 13th, as they sat in the poor little room of the house in which the Emperor had sought refuge at Aix, he fell to discussing the plan of the six subalterns with General Gourgaud. The latter, who was no fool though coarse, said:

"The plan is not worth a brass farthing! What a pity Your Majesty lacks the nerve to surrender to the English. This would be the best possible issue. The *rôle* of an adventurer is beneath your dignity. . . . History

[9] Houssaye, *1815.*

will say your abdication was inspired only by fear, because *you do not sacrifice yourself to the last. . . .*"

The sneak was preaching to the hero, and the latter listened in silence for there was nothing to be said.

"Yes, to surrender might possibly be the wisest course," the Emperor remarked at last, gazing to where the rigging of the *Bellerophon* was outlined sharp and clear against the purple sunset sky: "I intended to go on the *Bellerophon* yesterday, but deferred. . . . I cannot bear the thought of living in the midst of enemies. . . ."

Suddenly a bird darted in through the window and took refuge in a corner of the room. Gourgaud rose and caught it in his hand.

"Let go, let go, enough of suffering!" cried Napoleon.

Gourgaud let the bird out of the window.

"Now then, let us watch its flight, it will be an augury," said the Emperor.

"It is flying towards the *Bellerophon* Your Majestry," Gourgaud ejaculated triumphantly.[10]

Napoleon said nothing but his countenance grew sombre. Again he heard the call: "Walk into the cage, pretty Polly! . . ."

That same night having decided to combine both plans he ordered his effects to be loaded on board the two luggers and the Danish schooner.

At eleven o'clock General Beker reported to the Emperor that all was ready. No answer was given. Beker left him and after waiting some time asked General Bertrand to report again. No sooner had Bertrand

[10] Houssaye, *1815*, III.

opened his mouth than the Emperor interrupted him with the words:

"I am not going to-day; I will spend the night here."

A few minutes later he sent word to Las Cases and General Lallemand that to-morrow at daybreak he was going on the *Bellerophon*.

However, he did not and again postponed his departure for another day. Once more, he dispatched Las Cases to the *Bellerophon*. Aware that the English government refused to commit itself he wanted at least to extract a pledge from Maitland that he would not be arrested as a prisoner of war.

"I am not empowered to deal with the matter and therefore unable to commit myself to anything," replied that officer. "Still I presume that public opinion in England, which is more powerful even than the supreme authorities, will compel the government to act in conformity with the magnanimous sentiments of the English nation." [11]

In the language of honour this signified:

"Napoleon will find refuge in England; provided he comes to her threshold as a supplicant she will not betray him."

Such was the reply brought by Las Cases to the Emperor. Once again he summoned his followers in council. Opinions were divided; some advised him "to board the *Bellerophon*," others were opposed to it. General Montholon urged him to follow the original plan, to creep to the estuary of the Gironde where the *Bayadère* was still lying in wait. General Lallemand advised the

[11] Houssaye, *1815*, III.

Emperor to escape in the Danish schooner—the empty barrel again!—or to rejoin the army which had by now withdrawn beyond the Loire. The 14th naval regiment could be relied upon, as were also the regiments of the line at Rochefort and La Rochelle, the federates, the garrison at Bordeaux, the 2nd hussars at Niort, many units might join them on the way and the whole army would acclaim him with rapture.

"All ranks long to fight and die for Your Majesty," concluded Lallemand.

"No," replied Napoleon shaking his head: "Did this concern the Empire I might have attempted a second Elba, but I do not wish a single cannon shot to be fired for my own sake. To-morrow morning we start."

Left alone with Gourgaud he showed him the draft of his letter to the Prince-Regent:

> Your Royal Highness,
>
> An object of attack to all the factions which divide my country and of the enmity of the great powers of Europe, I have ended my political career and I come like Themistocles to take my seat at the hearth of the English people. I place myself under the protection of its laws, whose shelter I claim from Your Royal Highness as from the most powerful, the most constant and the most generous of my enemies.[12]

He intended to despatch Gourgaud with this letter to England to transmit it personally to the Prince-Regent; and therewith set out to plan his life in England, in a country-cottage ten or twelve miles from London, surrounded by a band of faithful followers. He would as-

[12] *Mémorial*, I.

sume the name of Colonel Muiron, the same who was killed upon his breast when defending him from Austrian bullets upon the bridge of Arcola and whose blood had squirted over his face. "I offer myself as a sacrifice" —Muiron had not merely said, but acted upon this. Thus did Napoleon's soul remind the *Man* of a forgotten lesson.

"To end his days in a country-cottage"—what an idyll! As though the English government, Wellington, Blücher, Fouché, Talleyrand and all of them would ever credit or permit such a thing! "A schoolboy would have shown greater cunning." At forty-six Napoleon was still as a boy of six.

At sunrise on the 15th July the Emperor boarded the French brig, *Epervier*:

> "He wears the grey coat of a soldier
> And a little cocked hat on his head." [13]

The same as at Austerlitz and Waterloo.

As he came on board the crew's customary greeting of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" sounded like a great sob.

"Is it Your Majesty's pleasure that I should accompany you to the cruiser, according to instructions?" asked General Beker.

"No," replied Napoleon: "Better return to the island. It would not do, if it were said that France betrayed me to England." [14]

The boat—Charon's bark—put off. Did he realize—*remember* that he was leaving France and the world forever?

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[13] Zedlitz, *Nächtliche Heerschau.*
[14] Houssaye, *1815,* III.

The *Bellerophon* cast anchor at Plymouth on the 26th July, and on the 31st Admiral Lord Keith announced to "General Bonaparte" the English government's decision—lifelong exile on the island of St. Helena.

Napoleon's indignation at this act was mild and short lived.

"I refuse to go to St. Helena," he told his followers: "this is a humiliating climax. . . . I would rather my blood had reddened the deck of the *Bellerophon*!"

"Yes, indeed, Your Majesty, let us rather defend ourselves and be killed, or explode the powder-magazine!" they blustered.[15]

That same day the Emperor strolled out upon the upper deck to look at the multitude of boats crowded with curious sight-seers, and "his face wore its customary expression," recalls an eye-witness. Already he has submitted. "No one knows better than myself how to bow before the inevitable; herein lies the true power of wisdom, the triumph of the spirit." [16]

The *Bellerophon* being too small a vessel for such a long voyage, a large war frigate, the *Northumberland* under the command of Admiral Cockburn was being equipped at Portsmouth. The frigate, however, was not yet in readiness, and it was only on the 4th August that the *Bellerophon* put out to sea to meet the *Northumberland*.

Napoleon spent the whole of that day locked up in his cabin. His followers were keenly anxious; know-

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[15] Gourgaud, I.
[16] *Mémorial*, I.

ing that he carried about his person a wallet with poison, they feared the worst.

When at night Montholon entered the cabin, his face wore such a frightened look that the Emperor at once understood what was on his mind.

"How pleased the English would be if I committed suicide!" he said laughing.[17]

Still think of it he did.

He said to Las-Cases: "I sometimes feel inclined to leave you all, my dear fellow . . . one has but to turn one's head a bit. . . . Especially as it would not be against my convictions. . . . I do not believe in eternal damnation. . . . God in His infinite mercy could never tolerate such a thing, particularly in a case like this. For after all, this would but signify a desire to return to Him a little sooner."

As is customary in such instances, Las-Cases began to expound on patience, courage, on the possibility of a change for the better. After listening attentively Napoleon answered: "Perhaps you are right. Yes, man must fulfil his destiny; this is also my great rule in life. Let us therefore fulfil it!"

"And he changed the subject, calmly and almost lightly." [18]

Nevertheless he deemed it necessary to sign a "Protest" composed by Las Cases.

"I solemnly protest, before heaven and men, against the violence committed upon me. . . . I am not England's prisoner, but her guest. . . . From the moment I came on board the *Bellerophon*, I seated myself at

[17] Gourgaud, I.
[18] *Mémorial*, I.

the hearth of the British people. . . . If the British government in giving the commander of the *Bellerophon* the order to receive me, laid a trap for me, it has cast dishonour upon itself and its standard. . . . I appeal to history. History will say that the enemy, who for twenty years had fought the English nation, now came of his free will in his misfortune to seek shelter in its laws. . . . And how did England answer his appeal? . . . Hypocritically she stretched out a hand, and when he grasped it she assassinated him." [19]

If truth must be told, all this is less convincing than it appears to be. Childish simplicity cannot be forgiven in politics. He himself is aware what a heavy burden he is for the earth to carry. "When I die, the whole world will say: 'Ouf!'" [20]

Could England receive such a guest? Measure for measure: England treated Napoleon no worse than he himself acted towards the King of Spain. Plymouth for Bayonne. England might have answered him in his own words: "When my great political chariot thunders past, way must be made for it, and woe to him who falls under its wheels!"

There is sacrifice in what befell him; and there is also retribution, which cannot be called unmerited; and so it were better for him to have submitted to it in silence.

On the 7th August, the *Northumberland* with the Emperor Napoleon on board set sail for St. Helena.

[19] *Mémorial*, I.
[20] Rémusat, I.

Upon the dark waves of the ocean,
When stars shed their beams from the sky
There flies a lone ship like a phantom
She flies with all sails outspread.

No pennon aloft her is floating,
Her tapering masts rise erect;
And silently loom through the port-holes
The barrels of heavy iron guns.

The grim rugged cliffs of an island
Rise out of the ocean bed.
A grave has been dug on that island,
The Emperor lies buried within. . . .[21]

Buried alive.

[21] Lermontov.

III

ST. HELENA

1815—1821

"The appearance of St. Helena, on viewing it from the sea, is different from that of any land I ever saw. . . . The rock, rising abruptly from the ocean, with its oblong shape and perpendicular sides, suggests to one's mind more the idea of a huge dark-coloured ark lying at anchor . . . than of a land intended for the habitation and support of living beings." [1]

The plateau known as Rupert's Hill, 1,500 feet above sea level with the abandoned farm of Longwood, a former cattle shed which was assigned to the Emperor for a dwelling, was the most sinister place upon this sinister island. Black cliffs—for prison walls; low hanging clouds—for prison vaults; bottomless pits and a boundless ocean all around. Like "some other world," "the country from whose bourne no traveller returns," [2] the entrance to Dante's Inferno with the legend:

"Abandon hope, all ye who enter."

Here nature herself is a damned captive of hell doomed to eternal torture. Always the same wind—

[1] Abell (L. E. Balcombe), *Recollections of the Emperor Napoleon.*
[2] *Mémorial*, I.

the south-easterly trade wind, is blowing; and the same fierce sun of the tropics is always shining. "This wind lacerates my soul, this sun burns into my brain!" complains the Emperor.[3]

The seasons never change: it is neither winter nor summer, neither spring nor autumn, but some medium state, everlastingly the same. For eight months in the year there is rain, wind and sun; and for the rest of the time—sun, wind and rain: unearthly melancholy, the monotony of eternity.

The soil is like that in the land of Lethe—chalky clay rendered sticky by the rain, clogging the feet, which cannot move, as in delirium.

Vegetation, too, is Lethe-like: meagre rubber trees, distorted and bent all in one direction by the wind, dry broom, oily cactuses and pale poisonous wolf's milkwort. Low trailing phantom-clouds: you enter one, and, lo, everything becomes obliterated in the mists; you too disappear and become a ghost to your own self.

No thunderstorms ever break out on the island; the mountain peak of Diana acts as a lightning conductor; there is only suffocating heat, everlasting dolour.

The devil himself could not have invented for Napoleon a more perfect hell.

"English diplomatists had caught their great enemy: their first wish was to get somebody else to shoot him or hang him: failing which, they were determined to lock him up like a pickpocket," writes Lord Rosebery.

"To kill Napoleon outright would have been more

[3] O'Meara, I.

magnanimous," says Las Cases, the Emperor's fellow-captive.[4]

"I will not commit suicide, so as to deprive my enemies of this satisfaction. I swore I would drink the cup to the dregs, but I should be glad had they killed me," [5] said the Emperor himself.

And recalling the shooting of King Murat in Calabria, added: "the Calabrians proved themselves lesser barbarians and more magnanimous than the men of Plymouth." [6] "If I learnt that an order had come for my execution, I should accept it as a boon and feel happy." [7]

For a long time men lacked the strength to lift and bind the colossus plunged in lethargic sleep, he was lifted at last, bound, placed in a coffin and the lid nailed down securely.

On the 15th October 1816, after a voyage of seventy-two days, the *Northumberland* cast anchor in the harbour of James Town. Longwood was not yet ready. The prisoner was installed at the Briars, a villa belonging to Balcombe, an English merchant, and transferred to Longwood only on the 10th December. Three prisons—three coffins, one within the other, encompassed him. The first is the ocean: the island of St. Helena is two thousand kilometres distant from the Cape of Good Hope; the second is the circumference of the island—forty-four kilometres; the third is the inner

[4] *Mémorial,* IV.
[5] O'Meara, I.
[6] *Mémorial,* IV.
[7] O'Meara, I.

twelve-mile circle, guarded by sentinels within which the prisoner is permitted to walk or ride. The English encampment lies not a hundred yards from Longwood facing his very windows, so that at every step he encounters an English bayonet. At 9 o'clock in the evening the sentries are drawn closer together and the house is so narrowly surrounded, that none can enter or leave it unseen. All night the sentries patrol round it. Every spot accessible, or supposed to be accessible, for a landing is closely guarded, as are all the footpaths leading to the sea, even such steep ones as the Emperor with his *embonpoint* would never be able to descend without breaking his neck.

During the long years of his campaigns he had become so accustomed to an active life that frequent and distant rides had become a matter of necessity for more than his health—for life itself. Very soon after the arrival at Longwood, however, he gave them up in disgust: "I cannot turn about like a squirrel in a cage; when I feel a horse under me, I want to gallop straight ahead; the consciousness that this is impossible, is torture." [8] The doctors threaten him with dangerous illness if he gives up riding. "All the better, the sooner it all ends, the better!" he answers indifferently.

His whole life was movement, work, action, combat —and suddenly all is inactivity, objectless stagnation, quiescence—death. "This transformation from active life to complete stagnation has entirely ruined my constitution." [9] The process starts with the spirit in its deepest essence—will-power. His all-devouring will-

[8] *Mémorial* IV.
[9] O'Meara, II.

power, the boundless spiritual driving force erstwhile directed upon the universe, now wholly concentrated upon himself, tortures and devours him. "He will devour his own heart," as Byron had foretold. "The chastisement of quietude," in Pushkin's wonderful rendering.

The tragedy of such an existence is that it is protracted and split into a multitude of fragments. The cup of death is drained drop by drop. "I am being murdered with pin-pricks. *On m'assassine a coups d'épingles*," is his monotonous complaint, his ever-repeated moan. "He whom the Allied armies of all Europe were scarcely able to vanquish, is being assassinated with pin-pricks." [10] He is like a man stripped naked, bound to a stake, smeared all over with honey and left to be devoured by insects.

The horror of the execution is its humiliation. "All Europe's telescopes are bracketed on St. Helena." All the Fouchés, Talleyrands, the Wellingtons and Blüchers, the knaves of all times present and future are looking on and waiting to gloat over the naked man's torture when he begins to writhe under the insects' bite.

"I swore I would drain the cup to the dregs." But no sooner had he put his lips to it, than he realized it to be bottomless. It is a terrible thing for anyone half-alive to suffocate in a coffin; how much more awful it is for one who is living and eternally young.

"Who says he has grown old? Why, he has strength

[10] Gourgaud, *Letter to the Emperor Alexander*, I.

for forty more campaigns in his belly!" exclaimed an old English soldier at St. Helena on catching sight of Napoleon.[11]

"I feel myself to be as strong as ever, I am neither tired nor weak. I am myself surprised at the scant effect these last great events have had upon me. They grazed me as lead does marble; the spring bent but did not break beneath the pressure; it rebounded with its former elasticity," [12] he used to say at the beginning of his captivity.

The boyish nature of the forty-six-year-old Emperor revealed itself in his games with Betsy and Jenny Balcombe, the little daughters of his host at the Briars. He romps, plays tricks, laughs, plays blind man's buff with them and enjoys the fun as much as they.

Many years later, old Mrs. Abell never spoke of him otherwise than as her erstwhile playmate.[13]

Eternal youth means eternal hope.

"Sooner or later we shall leave this place for England or America." [14] "I presume, that when things right themselves in France and everything becomes tranquillized, the English government will allow me to return to Europe. . . . The dead alone do not come back." [15] But his inner consciousness warns him, that with regard to himself this maxim may be reversed: Who returns not, is dead.

He says to Gourgaud: "If you leave me, I may yet reach France before you. . . . There everything is in

[11] *Mémorial,* II.
[12] *Mémorial,* I.
[13] Abell.
[14] Gourgaud, I.
[15] O'Meara, I.

a ferment; we must wait patiently for the crisis. I still have a long life before me; my career is by no means ended." [16]

He hopes St. Helena will prove a second Elba: A party of English "rioters," wishing to make him their leader in the defence of the people's rights, will seize control over several English ports, send out ships to fetch him, and land him in France to overthrow the Bourbons.[17]

A French colonel, who wished to penetrate to St. Helena in a steam-launch to deliver the Emperor, is arrested at Rio de Janeiro. Where one failed, another might succeed.

A midshipman from the English frigate *Conqueror* lying in James Town harbour, had whispered to someone that "the English themselves think the Emperor will soon return to his throne!" [18] So there is jubilation at Longwood.

"Were France now to offer me the crown, I would refuse it," says he, adding however: "unless I were certain that such is the unanimous wish of the people." [19]

Short of France, there is still America.

"Who knows whether Your Majesty may not found a vast empire in America?"

"No, I am too old." [20]

However, he does not believe in his old age.

"I still have fifteen years before me!" he says in

[16] Gourgaud, II.
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] Gourgaud, II.
[19] O'Meara, I.
[20] Gourgaud, I.

March 1817, and just before the beginning of his fatal illness in October:

"I am not yet fifty, my health is tolerably good, I may live at least another thirty years." [21]

It is thus in his good moments; not so in others.

"Do you imagine that I have no bad moments, when I wake up at night and remember what I was and what I have become?" [22]

What means this eternal hope? It means boundless courage.

"How altered you are!" he tells General Gourgaud, who has lost heart and is contemplating betrayal. "Would you like me to tell you why? You lack courage. We here are on a battle-field, and who abandons the field because of ill luck, is a coward!" [23]

Consulting a map of the island, he draws up a plan of escape.

"The best way by day time would be through the town. Or if from the beach, we could easily despatch ten sentries with our hunting muskets."

"Not ten—twenty, Your Majesty." [24]

These plans are preposterous: to disguise himself as a valet or to hide in a dirty clothes' basket. Still, no sentry on earth could have prevented the escape of a man absolutely fearless, not placed under lock and key but moving freely within a twelve-mile radius, if once he had firmly resolved to do so. He could have escaped, yet does not, something holds him back. What is it?

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[21] Gourgaud, I.
[22] *Ibid.*
[23] Gourgaud, II.
[24] Gourgaud, I.

"We must submit to fate; our destinies are written in heaven," says he gazing upwards. "We must follow our star." [25] "I think I owe it to my Star to be here." [26]

So this is what is holding him back, watching over him, his own Star-Soul, separated from him and risen against him. This is the invisible chain which binds him to St. Helena, as Prometheus to the rock.

The vulture pecking at the Titan's liver, is the governor of the island, Sir Hudson Lowe.

"The god of war, the god of victory" needs to be at war and victorious to the very end. But against whom? The Longwood rats, fleas, cockroaches, bugs and mosquitoes? Yes, and also against the age-long arch-enemy —England. England is Lowe. The caged lion must gnaw the bars of his cage; these bars are—Lowe. The man who is buried alive must strike at his coffin-lid; this lid is Lowe.

Possibly, he is not at all as great a "monster," as the prisoner will have it. Lank, bony, sinewy, freckled, with fiery-red hair, having started his career as a small military semi-agent, semi-spy at Corsica he attained the rank of general by his own efforts and is but a blind tool in the hands of the English government.

"Tell General Bonaparte he is lucky to have fallen into the hands of a man as kind-hearted as myself; any other would have had him chained up for his tricks," says Lowe. [27]

"Kind-hearted" is saying too much; still he might have been worse.

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[25] O'Meara, I.
[26] *Ibid.*
[27] O'Meara, I.

"My instructions are of a nature which it is impossible even to reveal," he owns once, and forthwith writes to the English ministers petitioning for favours to the Emperor.[28]

"General Bonaparte has set about this business badly: he should have kept quiet for a few years and at last his lot would have excited sympathy." [29] Perhaps it is so, and apparently Lowe sincerely wishes it should be so.

Neither is he devoid of a sense of humour.

"I did not know General Bonaparte needed to stew himself in hot water for so many hours, or to repeat the ceremony so often," he says, laughing almost good-naturedly over the Emperor's habit of hot baths, for which the water runs short at Longwood. "Monsters" do not possess a sense of humour.

"He was England's most bitter enemy as well as mine, but I forgive him everything," he said at Napoleon's death-bed.[30]

Is this the base hypocrisy of an "executioner"? Who knows? At all events for the executioner to forgive his victim, is by no means easy.

Each of them, however, is both victim and executioner in one. Both torture and murder one another; drive one another crazy: which of the two does it most —it is difficult to decide.

Lowe, indeed, becomes mentally ill from constant fear of Napoleon's flight: he knows that he can escape; he knows not what prevents him.

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[28] *Ibid.*
[29] Gourgaud, II.
[30] Masson, *Napoléon à St. Hélène.*

The prisoner claims from the gaoler the impossible —the grant for freedom of locomotion and communication with the inhabitants of the island: to do this, would mean opening the eagle's cage. He demands that the gaoler should not set eyes on him: this would mean to cease guarding him.

"The Emperor says he would rather die than allow Lowe to enter." [31] When the latter wishes to force an entrance, he shouts:

"He will have to step across my dead body! Give me my pistols!" [32]

Loaded pistols and several swords are always lying in readiness in his bedroom.

Every morning an English officer comes to Longwood and as the Emperor hides himself from him, peers through the key-hole to ascertain that the prisoner is safe. One day, when sitting in his bath Napoleon caught sight of the officer watching him. Jumping out of the bath he went for him, stark naked and terrifying. The officer fled, while the Emperor threatened to shoot him.

"The first man who enters my room will be shot dead!"

"He is my prisoner of war, and I will subdue him!" shouts Lowe in a powerless rage, knowing well he can do nothing: he may kill him but not subdue.

The gaoler is turned into the captive. "When he looks at me, his eyes are like those of a trapped hyena," says the Emperor. "Between us stood a cup of coffee and it seemed to me he had poisoned it by his mere look. I ordered Marchand [his valet] to throw it out of the

[31] *Mémorial*, I.
[32] O'Meara, I.

window." [33] Thus is the "trapped hyena" transformed into the mighty and supernatural Satan of the Longwood hell.

Though they never set eyes on each other during the last five years, a dull endless feud went on ceaselessly, no longer over main points but over a petty detail—the Imperial title.

"I would rather die than be called General Bonaparte. It would mean that I no longer considered myself an Emperor." [34] "To you, sir, I am not General Bonaparte. Neither you nor anyone else in the world can deprive me of the titles belonging to me!" the Emperor thunders against Lowe at one of their last interviews.

Yet has not he abdicated twice and does he not abdicate now once more? "I made enough stir in the world. . . . I want rest . . . this is why I renounced my throne." [35] No, he did not abdicate: "I repudiate my abdication. . . . I am ashamed of it. . . . It was my mistake, a momentary weakness. . . ." [36] Anon he remembers, anon forgets the sacrifice. Or was Gourgaud, the sneak, right in saying: "History will say that you abdicated out of fear, because you do not sacrifice yourself to the end."

Yet there are moments when he remembers everything and triumphs over all.

"He [Lowe] is powerless against me: I am as free

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[33] O'Meara, I.
[34] O'Meara, II.
[35] O'Meara, I.
[36] *Mémorial*, III.

here, as when I ruled all Europe." [37] "A fall usually has the effect of lowering a man's character; but on the contrary, my fall has elevated me prodigiously." [38] "Adversity was wanting to my career. Had I died on the throne, enveloped in the dense atmosphere of my power, I should to many have remained an enigma but now misfortune will enable all to judge of me without disguise." [39] "You disbelieve me but I do not regret my past grandeur; you see me slightly affected by what I have lost." "Why should I disbelieve you, Sire?" replies Las Cases. "You are certainly greater here than at the Tuileries. . . . Your gaolers are at your feet. . . . Your spirit dominates all who approach you. . . . Like St. Louis in Saracen captivity, you are lord of your captors. . . ." [40]

Or like Prometheus on a rock.[41]

Toby, the poor old Malay slave, is a gardener at the Briars. There is a wondrous and awe-inspiring link between poor Toby and poor "Bony."

English sailors served Toby as English ministers did Bony: deceived, trapped and sold him into slavery.

The Emperor made friends with Toby and wished to ransom him. Toby too loved Napoleon and always called him the "good gentleman," or simply the "good man." [42]

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[37] O'Meara, I.
[38] *Mémorial*, IV.
[39] *Mémorial*, I.
[40] *Mémorial*, III.
[41] *Mémorial*, IV. *"Napoléon cloué sur un roc a la façon de Prometée."*
[42] Abell. O'Meara, I.

"Napoleon often questioned the old man about his youth, his country and family, and present position; he seemed anxious to penetrate his feelings." [43]

One day, when out walking at the Briars with Las Cases the Emperor saw Toby digging beds, and pausing in front of him, said:

"What a contemptible creature is man! All the outward shells are similar yet the kernels differ. This is what people refuse to understand and which is the cause of so much evil. Were Toby a Brutus he would commit suicide; were he an Æsop he might have become the governor's councillor; a devout Christian, he would bless his chains for Christ's sake. But poor Toby thinks nothing of all this and bends his back to his work. . . ."

The Emperor remained silent for a few minutes, then moved away adding:

"Poor Toby is certainly far from King Richard! Yet the crime is none the less atrocious: for this man too possessed a family, his own joys and sorrows. A terrible crime was committed by forcing him to drag out his days in slavery. . . ."

He paused suddenly, then continued:

"I see by your eyes, my friend, you think poor Toby is not the only one at St. Helena! . . ."

Whether affronted by the comparison or desirous to strengthen my courage, he exclaimed with sublime dignity: "No, my friend, there can be no comparison, for if the crime is greater, the victim has also a greater

[43] *Mémorial*, I.

force of resistance! Our bodies are not tortured, and if they were we have a soul to conquer our torturers. . . . Perhaps even our lot is enviable. The eyes of the universe are fixed upon us. . . . We are the martyrs of an immortal cause. . . . We here struggle against the oppression of the gods and the prayers of nations are for us!" "[44]

This is the meaning of "Prometheus upon a rock is offered as a sacrifice for mankind." Here ends Napoleonic "history," and begins the "mystery." Indeed whose destiny, whose image throughout the ages and peoples is more akin to that of the ancient Titan?

"*Commediante*" was Pope Pius VII's name for Napoleon. But, may be, his whole life—like the comparison with Toby—is no longer a human but a *divine comedy*. "He will be the envy of his fellow men and the most miserable of them all," he foretold of himself at the beginning of his life, and the prophecy was fulfilled at the close of it: Napoleon was more to be pitied than Toby.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit," was spoken of such as Toby, but not of such as Napoleon.

Who was it then that linked them together? Who "compared" them? And for what purpose? That he does not yet know; he thinks that "in this case there can be no comparison." Yes there can: has the son forgotten his mother? Has Napoleon forgotten the Revolution, which with the roaring of beasts and with voices of

[44] *Mémorial*, I.

thunder repeated the gentle words of God: "The last shall be first"?

"No one in the world can deprive me of my titles"; he still clings to his Imperial rank as a drowning man to a straw; the "*commediante*" in him is still acting a part. The low-beamed house at Longwood—the former cow-shed—with leaking roofs, chintz hangings dangling in tatters from the damp walls, creaking floors, and rat infested—a rat once jumped out of the Emperor's hat—still provides a setting for the strictest court-etiquette according to the Tuileries ceremonial: Liveried footmen; dinner served on gold and silver plate; next to His Majesty the empty chair of the Empress; the courtiers standing stiffly at attention.

On someone mentioning once that the Chinese worshipped their emperor as a Deity, "Quite right, too," he remarked.

When out walking he lost a shoe-buckle; everybody made a dash to pick it up. "At the Tuileries he would never have tolerated this, but here he seemed pleased, and we all were grateful to him for the honour," recalls Las Cases.

"I myself know that I am lowered, but to be reminded of this by one of my own people. . . ." the Emperor once began to complain of one of his followers and did not finish. . . .

"These words together with his gesture and tone of voice pierced my heart. I wanted to throw myself at his feet and embrace them," writes Las Cases again.

"Men in general are exacting, conceited and frequently wrong," continued the Emperor. "Knowing this, I do not trust myself and always ask: would I

act like this if I were at the Tuileries? That is my great standard." [45]

This standard is false: he lowers himself by it. But only sneaks like Gourgaud or the forty thousand Napoleonic historians could gloat over it: "He is as small as we are, he is as vile as we!"

In eternity he is a chained Prometheus: in time—a man sitting by the fire with a cheek swollen from a bad tooth, and giving vent to senile grumbling.

"Damn that wind! That is what makes me ill! . . . You see I am shuddering with ague like a coward with fear. . . . Tell me, doctor, what is the easiest way to die? . . . They say from freezing: one dies sleeping. . . ." [46]

He knows he will not kill himself, but thinks of death as one athirst thinks of water.

Minutes, hours, days, months, years—always the same torture: an all-devouring melancholy, fierce as the sun of the tropics.

Time hangs heavy on his hands. In the morning he lies in bed or sits for hours in his bath. The afternoon is spent on the sofa with a book, himself unwashed, unkempt, dressed in a white dressing gown and white hose, the collar of his shirt undone, a red kerchief on his head. The table is heaped with books and there is a litter of them at his feet and on the floor. At times he dictates all night long; then buries the manuscripts in the earth. In place of riding he has put up a see-saw in the house and rides on it as on a wooden horse.

In the evenings His Majesty holds a drawing-room:

[45] *Mémorial*, I.
[46] O'Meara, I.

they play at cards, dominoes, chess and converse of bygone days "like shades in the Elysian fields."

Says the Emperor: "I shall soon be forgotten. Had I been killed in the Kremlin by a cannon shot, I might have been as great as Caesar or Alexander. . . . But now I am almost nothing." [47]

For a long time he sits silently, his head bowed upon his hands; then rising says:

"What a romance my life has been!" [48]

He very much dislikes, seems almost afraid of being left alone after dinner. He sits at table for hours to prevent the ladies from rising, maintains a desultory conversation, or passing into the drawing-room reads aloud, mostly French classical tragedies; Voltaire's "Zaïre" is a particular favourite of his, of which everybody has become so sick that General Gourgaud and Madame de Montholon conspire to steal it from the library. His audience dozes, but he keeps a sharp watch over them.

"Madame de Montholon, are you asleep?"

"Wake up, Gourgaud!"

He forces them to read aloud as a punishment and sits listening, his hands folded, but five minutes later drops into a doze.[49]

"*Quel ennui mon Dieu!*" he murmurs when left by himself.

He betakes himself to his see-saw, or sends General Gourgaud a problem on conic sections or on supplying

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[47] Gourgaud, II.
[48] *Mémorial*, I.
[49] Holland.

a besieged town with flour in shells; or soliloquizes between two yawns:

"Man is apparently formed out of mud by solar heat. Herodotus describes how in his time the Nile slime was transformed into rats, and that the process of their formation out of the slime could be followed with the eye. . . ." [50]

Or teases the "pious" Gourgaud by arguing on the superiority of Mahommedanism over Christianity, because the latter took three hundred years to conquer the world and the former only one hundred.

"Fancy, the Pope actually does believe in Christ!" he says genuinely astonished.[51] "I say, Gourgaud, can God make a stick not have two ends?"

"Yes, Sire; a hoop is a stick, but it has no end." [52]

Everybody is silent. The Emperor frowns, then starts again, yawning:

"Cardinal Caselli sometimes succeeded in shaking my atheism. . . . Still, I think that when we are dead, we are altogether dead: *quand nous sommes morts, nous sommes bien morts.* What after all is a soul? . . . When out hunting I had the deer cut open and saw that their interior was the same as that of man. . . . Electricity, galvanism, magnetism—in these lies the great secret of nature. . . . I think myself that the brain pumps up these fluids and imparts life and that the soul is composed of these fluids. . . ." [53]

Silence again.

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[50] Gourgaud, II.
[51] *Ibid.*
[52] *Ibid.*
[53] *Ibid.*

"Why, Gourgaud, to-day you are as sombre as a grenadier's *colback*! and you too, Madame Bertrand, why are you so sad? Is it because yesterday I said you looked like a washerwoman?" . . .[54]

The poor woman blushes, does not know where to look, and the silence becomes still more oppressive. The wind howls in the chimney, rain beats in at the window; low trailing clouds peep in like ghosts.

"Damn it *messieurs* and *mesdames*, you are none too sociable!" says the Emperor rising from the table and passing into the drawing-room: "Ah, where is my poor Las Cases? He at least told me stories, whereas you all act like extinguishers!" [55]

The captives detest one another as only people lying together on a common straw pallet in a common prison, can hate. They quarrel endlessly over petty trifles; but even that is a boon; otherwise they would go mad from boredom.

One day, a newly acquired cow ran away from its stall; this caused such a violent quarrel between all the inhabitants of Longwood that it almost led to an explosion. The person chiefly responsible for the cow's safety was grand-equerry Gourgaud owing to the cow stall's proximity to the stables.

"The Emperor is extremely angry on account of the cow. If it is not found, he intends to slay all our hens, goats and kids," Gourgaud writes in his diary. "But I refuse to be concerned in these bovine affairs and one cow more or less at Longwood does not matter. . . .

[54] Gourgaud, II.
[55] *Ibid.*

Still, one has to put up with this as with all the rest." [56]

Gourgaud is at daggers drawn with the grand-marshal Montholon. What exactly took place between them, it is difficult to say, but the quarrel became further envenomed because of Madame de Montholon's becoming involved in it. She had a love intrigue with the Emperor and at Longwood gave birth to a child by him; this apparently was known to everybody except her husband; perhaps he knew it too but submitted.

The quarrel finally developed to such an extent that Gourgaud wanted to challenge Montholon to a duel.

"How dare you threaten him? You, sir, are a bandit, an assassin. . . . I forbid you to challenge him and myself will fight you in his stead. . . . I will, damn you!" thundered the Emperor, not daring to look him in the face.

Truth must be owned: this is one of Napoleon's darkest deeds: thus to betray the last and sole remaining loyal friend, to seduce his wife neither out of love nor even out of caprice—for women might be found for Napoleon even at St. Helena—but merely from boredom, between "Zaïre" and a see-saw—one needed to fall low indeed: "I know I am lowered." The measure of the fall gives the measure of the torture.

That torture lasted six years. For six years the Captive Knight awaits his freedom.

> "Lo, I am chained in a heavy stone armour
> A helmet of stone presses hard on my brow,

[56] Gourgaud.

My shield bears a charm 'gainst the sword and the arrow,
My charger bears onwards with no one to guide him.

"Time, ever-fleeting, he is my charger,
The barbican bars—my heavy iron vizor,
My cuirass of stone are the walls of the castle,
My shield—the iron door that shuts off the dungeon.

"Faster, fly faster, O Time ever-fleeting,
For stifled am I in this new-fashioned armour.
Death, on arrival, will hold me my stirrup . . .
Then shall I alight and tear off my vizor. . . ."

IV

DEATH

1821

At last he fell ill. The disease crept up unawares. The first symptoms—swelling in the legs, scorbut, a pain in the right side appeared in the spring of 1817. Doctor O'Meara, a practitioner of no great merit but an honest and sound-minded man, informed Hudson Lowe that unless drastic measures were taken the Emperor's illness might become fatal; its main cause lay in his sedentary mode of life, the stubborn refusal to ride due to disgust at moving about in a restricted space.

Lowe became frightened not of his responsibility before the English government, to whom Napoleon's early death would be welcome; but of something else: possibly he had no wish to become Napoleon's assassin. He gave him to understand he was open to concessions. But the Emperor replied he would accept no benefactions from the "monster," and everything remained as before.

For many months he experienced ups and downs, till at last, in the autumn of 1819 he took a turn for the worse and was obliged to go to bed.

He felt a continual heaviness and pain in his right

side. The doctors thought it was the liver; but he at once guessed it to be the disease which had carried away his father—cancer of the stomach. He told no one of his surmise; possibly, was not sure of it himself.

The courage which had forsaken him in health returned in sickness. He did not want to die—"to flee from the field of battle." "I always had complete control over my body." He thought he would have it still.

He did not believe in doctors, refused to take medicine, followed his own treatment. As soon as he felt better after an attack he took to gardening. All day long, at the head of a gang of Chinese coolies, he planted trees, laid out flower beds, lawns, walks and shrubberies, installed water-pipes, fountains, cascades, grottoes. He was so engrossed in the work, as if once again about to realize his life-long dream: to create a paradise out of hell on earth.

This treatment appeared to suit him. But soon it all came to nothing: the fierce sun burnt the flowers, the rain washed away the earthworks, the wind broke and uprooted the trees. No paradise came out of it, hell remained a hell, and he finally got so sick of this Sisyphus task, that he shut himself up in the house once more.

Then came another attack. In his bad moments of pain he recalled his childhood, his mother.

"*Ah, maman Letizia, maman Letizia!*" he would whisper, burying his face in his hands.[1]

Out there, at the beginning of life there had been something firm and stable—"a Holy Rock," "*Pietra-*

[1] Antommarchi, I.

Santa," as one of his Corsican great-grandmothers was named; here at the end of life, is the same Rock—St. Helena; and all that came between them was but a fleeting phantom-cloud.

Once more he got out of bed and began to roam about the rooms; but grew weaker every day.

"What sort of life is this?" he said. "I do not live, I vegetate. . . . Everything is a burden to me. . . . Ah, doctor, what a good thing it is to be quiet. My bed for me now is the best spot on earth; I would not exchange for any kingdoms in the world. But how I have lowered myself! I who used not to tolerate quiet, am now plunged in lethargy; I have to make an effort to raise my eyelids. I used to dictate on different subjects simultaneously to four or five secretaries, and they had to write as fast as I spoke. But then I was Napoleon, and now am—nothing!" [2]

Nay, now as then—he is always the same. One day the doctor was feeling his pulse; the patient looked up with a whimsical smile and said:

"It is exactly as if a general listened to an army's manoeuvres. . . ." [3]

Listening with the ear, and not seeing with the eye: for he was blind. In that remark all Napoleon the Seer stands revealed.

Once again the spirit conquers the flesh: he recovers by "force of will."

"To the devil with your medicine!" he tells doctor Antommarchi, a young Corsican and a rude ignorant and conceited man: "there is something in me which

[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*

electrifies me and compels me to believe that my machine still obeys my will. . . . Is not that so, you damned doctor, Corsican monster?" he adds laughing and tweaking his ear.[4]

He goes for a long ride, five or six miles at a gallop. But the treatment no longer takes effect, the gallop does not produce the customary perspiration; on the contrary he feels worse. "The Emperor is buried in profound gloom," writes Antommarchi on the 23rd January 1821.

"Doctor," the patient says next day: "do not deceive me; I will know how to die. If my hour has struck neither you nor any doctor on earth can alter it." [5]

He realized that he was no longer combating disease but death and he looks her in the face as calmly as, time was, on the fields of battle; but here, buried alive, it is harder.

"Oh, why did the cannon balls spare me, if it is my lot to die such a mean death!" he at times gave vent to his indignation.[6]

"When I was Napoleon," he once remarked during washing, "I used to do it quickly and with pleasure. And now, is it not the same what I look like? Besides now it is more difficult for me to wash than formerly to draw up the plan of a whole campaign." [7]

He could scarcely eat; every morsel he tried to swallow made him sick and start vomiting. The pain in his side and stomach became intolerable.

"Just here, it is as if a razor cut me," he complained.[8]

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[4] Antommarchi, I.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] Antommarchi, II.
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] Masson, *Napoléon à St. Hélène.*

Every evening the officer on duty had to report to the governor that he had seen "General Bonaparte." For a fortnight he failed to do so, because the latter did not show himself outside the house, and did not even approach the window. Finally, Lowe himself appeared at Longwood, walked all over the house, peeped in at the windows in the hope of seeing the Emperor, but saw no one and went away threatening the officer on duty to make short work of him if he did not press his claim to be shown Bonaparte, either alive or dead.

The officer, finally, attained his object: standing outside the window, he saw through an opening between the half-drawn curtains the patient seated in an arm-chair. Lowe, however, was not satisfied with this and demanded that his trusted emissary should be admitted within the house, threatening to enter it by force if denied. The result of all this would be difficult to foresee, had not the Emperor agreed to receive Dr. Arnott, an English regimental physician of whose noble character and cleverness he had heard so much.

Arnott advised him to move into the more spacious and airy new house built at Longwood especially for him.

"What for? All the same I am going to die," replied Napoleon with such calm assurance, that the doctor had not the courage to contradict him.[9]

A comet appeared in the sky on the 2nd April. On hearing this the Emperor murmured as if to himself:

"This means death: a comet announced the death of Cæsar." [10]

[9] Masson.
[10] Antommarchi, I.

Then came a sudden improvement. The pains subsided. He could take nourishment without feeling sick; crossed from his bed into an arm-chair; read the newspapers; listened to the history of Hannibal and the Iliad; asked for a flower to be picked in the garden and sat for a long time smelling it. Everybody rejoiced.

"Well, Doctor, so this apparently is not yet the end?" the Emperor said brightly as Antommarchi entered the room; then looking round at his followers, continued:

"Yes, my friends, I feel better to-day, but nevertheless I know that my end is near. After my death, you will return to Europe, will meet your friends and relatives and be happy. I, too, in the Elysian fields will meet my braves. Kleber, Desaix, Bessières, Duroc, Ney, Murat, Masséna, Berthier—all will welcome me. We will recall our great deeds together, and once again they will go mad with enthusiasm. We shall converse of our campaigns with the Hannibals, Scipios, Caesars, Frederics. . . . What rejoicings there will be! Provided the heaven-dwellers are not too terrified by such a gathering of soldiers!" he added laughing.[11]

Upon Dr. Arnott's entering the room, he told him he was feeling brighter.

"Nevertheless, doctor, the deed is done, the blow struck, and I am dying," and after a short pause in a solemn tone he went on: "Come here, Bertrand, I will speak and you must translate what I say into English word for word for Dr. Arnott."

After enumerating all the deceptions, aggressions,

[11] Antommarchi, II.

crimes and betrayals perpetrated by England he ended thus:

"You assassinated me, and dying upon this dreadful rock, I bequeath the shame and horror of my death to the reigning house of England!" [12]

Towards evening there was a turn for the worse: he had a collapse, almost a fainting fit.

A few days before he had started writing his testament, and now went on with it. Whenever he had the strength, he summoned Montholon and Marchand, locked himself up with them, sat up in bed and holding in one hand a folio of paper wrote with the other.

When fits of vomiting were followed by violent shivering, Marchand would wrap hot cloths round his benumbed legs.

"You ought to rest, Your Majesty," said Montholon.

"No, my son, I feel there is no time to lose." [13]

When seized with faintness he would drink a glass of strong Constanza wine, "adding fuel to the fire," as Arnott said; and went on with his writing.[14]

His testament contains a multitude of detailed clauses, enumerating hundreds of objects, sums of money and individuals. He recalls every person who ever did him a good turn, and in gratitude for them rewards not only the living but the dead in the persons of their children and grandchildren; he keeps adding fresh names, afraid to omit or forget anyone he thinks has a claim on him.

After a terrible night of tossing in feverish delirium,

[12] *Ibid.*
[13] Masson.
[14] *Ibid.*

he orders his jewel caskets to be brought to him, lays and sorts on the bed snuff-boxes, cases, medallions, cameos, watches, orders, the crosses of the Legion of Honour; and selects those to distribute as mementoes. To Doctor Antommarchi—a small gold box. On the escutcheon upon its lid, he carves with his failing hand and between two fits of vomiting, a clumsy but carefully traced imperial "N."

When everything is sorted and inscribed, he replaces the things in the cases, ties them up with green and red silk ribbons, seals them and hands over the keys to Marchand.

He repeats several times to Doctor Antommarchi his directions for a *post-mortem*: "I desire a *post-mortem* examination to be made, and if cancer of the stomach is revealed inform my son as a warning. They say this disease is hereditary in our family, so my son at least must take precautions against it. I have your promise, Doctor, mind you do not forget." [15]

He is concerned as to how his followers will return to Europe; is anxious lest they might again run short of food as on the voyage to St. Helena; makes a complete list of all the food supplies at Longwood, not forgetting the sheep in the pens.[16]

"I am not kind," he used to say: "No, I am not kind, I never was; but I am *reliable*, *je suis sûr*." [17]

One has to be "*sûr*" to be capable of concerning one-

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[15] Antommarchi, II.
[16] Masson.
[17] Lord Holland.

self with other people's hunger, when sick and vomiting oneself.

At night, a prey to the excruciating pain of the "cutting razor-blade," he dictates two *Reveries*: the first is an incoherent medley, possibly delirious raving; the second is on "the Best Organization of the National Guard for the Defence of France against Foreign Invasion." [18]

"My poor Chinamen," he recollects suddenly: "You will distribute twenty gold pieces among them, I must bid them a proper farewell." [19]

He directs himself to be interred on the banks of the Seine, "in the midst of the French people he loved so well," [20] or "in Corsica, in the Cathedral of Ajaccio, beside my ancestors."

"And if they refuse to release me from here even dead, lay me beside this running water, so fresh and pure!" [21]

Every day this water was brought him from the valley of Geraniums, where a cold limpid spring ran beneath three weeping willows. During his illness he grew particularly fond of this water.

After each sip of it, he would say:

"How good it is! *C'est bon, c'est bien bon!*" [22]

It seemed as if in directing himself to be laid beside that water, he repaid Mother Earth for it with the last of his possessions—his own dust.

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[18] Masson.
[19] Antommarchi, II.
[20] *Mémorial*, IV.
[21] Antommarchi, II.
[22] Masson.

"I die in the apostolic Roman religion, in the bosom of which I was born," so runs the opening clause of his testament.[23]

Is that really so?

At the beginning of his illness, he asked his uncle, Cardinal Fesch, to send him two priests, "so as not to die like a dog." [24] Consequently two Corsican abbots, fathers Vignali and Buonavita arrived at St. Helena.

On the 21st April, when he realized he was dying, the patient sent for father Vignali and said to him:

"Do you know what a *chapelle ardente* is?"

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"Did you ever officiate in one?"

"No, Sire."

"You will officiate in mine. When I am *in extremis*, you will put up an altar in the adjoining room, place the Sacrament upon it and recite the prayers for the dying. I was born in the Catholic faith and wish to fulfil all its rites and receive all its last ministrations."

Doctor Antommarchi who was standing at the foot of the bed could not refrain from a whimsical smile.

"I am tired of all your nonsense, sir!" exclaimed the Emperor: "I may excuse flippancy and bad manners, but callousness—never. Leave the room!"

He did so.

Turning to the priest, Napoleon resumed:

"When I die, you will place me in the *chapelle ardente*, and will officiate there unceasingly till my burial."

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[23] *Mémorial*, IV.
[24] O'Meara.

After a short silence, he turned the conversation to father Vignali's native village at Corsica, the little house he would build there and of the pleasant life in store for him.[25]

Father Vignali knelt by the bedside, kissed the hand which hung listlessly from the bed and softly left the room, his eyes full of tears. Perhaps he realized the futility of speaking of heaven to one who talked so well of earth.

A fortnight passed—a fortnight of death agony. The Emperor seemed to have forgotten about father Vignali, or if he remembered kept putting him off. At last on the 2nd May he sent for him but ordered him to come in ordinary clothes "*en costume bourgeois*," and "to show no one what he was carrying," *i.e.*, the Sacrament. This order he repeated several times.[26]

"It seems as if he had some desire for such assurance as the Church could give, but yet was ashamed to own it. He knew that some at St. Helena, and more in France, would deem his recourse to such consolation, infirmity: perhaps he deemed it so himself," writes Lord Holland quoting Montholon.[27]

The priest entered the dying man's chamber and remained alone with him while Marchand stood in the next room guarding the door. Half an hour later father Vignali came out and in all simplicity related

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[25] Masson, Antommarchi, II.
[26] Masson.
[27] Lord Holland.

how he had confessed and administered the Extreme Unction to the Emperor, but was unable to administer the Sacrament, "owing to the condition of his stomach." [28]

There was no change in the dying man's attitude after the Sacrament: he continued to be "just as simple and kind" to those around him and forgot himself in his care for others, but had no thought of heavenly things —all his thoughts were of earthly matters, his love was for earth alone until the very end.

An hour after father Vignali's departure he summoned his followers and addressed them: "I am dying. Be faithful to my memory and do not tarnish it in any way. I sanctified all the good principles of the Revolution and transferred them into my laws and my deeds. . . . Unfortunately, circumstances were stern, compelling me to use sternness in expectation of better times. But misfortunes set in; I could not unbend the bow, and France was deprived of the free institutions which I intended for her. But she will not condemn me, because she knows my designs, loves my name and my triumphs. Be you, too, at one with France, do not betray our glory. . . . All outside this is shame and ruin!" [29]

He who speaks thus—repents of nothing.

The last two days he suffered acutely, was restless, miserable and tossing with fever; every time he refreshed his parched lips with spring water from the valley of Geraniums, he repeated, as if thanking somebody:

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[28] Masson.
[29] Antommarchi, II.

"C'est bon, c'est bien bon."

His delirium was of battles: "Steingel, Desaix, Masséna! . . . Ah, it is victory. . . . Forward, quick, forward! We are winning! . . ." [80]

The night of the 4th-5th May passed in a continual expectation of the end. A gale was howling outside. Montholon sat alone by the Emperor. He was muttering something in his delirium, but so inarticulately as to be unintelligible. Suddenly he cried out:

"France! . . . Armée! . . ."

And starting to his feet, dashed out of bed. Montholon wanted to prevent him, but the patient began to struggle and they both rolled on the floor. The dying man gripped his throat with such force that Montholon was nearly suffocated and unable to call for help. At last, someone in the next room heard the scuffle; they dashed in, picked them up, separated them and laid Napoleon in bed. He moved no more. It was the last outburst of that force which had overturned the universe.

All day he lay as one dead; only a quiver of his face denoted that still the great Soldier was wrestling with his last foe—Death.

By nightfall the storm abated. At 5.49 P.M the sunset cannon boomed from the bastion of James Town fortress. The sun had set—Napoleon was dead.

His body was placed upon a narrow camp-bed and covered with the blue field cloak of Marengo; his sword lay at his side, a Crucifix upon his breast.

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[80] *Ibid.*

His face in death grew young again and resembled that of Bonaparte, the First Consul.

When the N. C. O.'s of the English garrison at Longwood paid their last homage to the dead Emperor, one of them said to his little son:

"Look at him well, he is the greatest man that ever lived." [31]

He was buried in the valley of Geraniums beside the spring and beneath the three weeping willows.

Lowe started a dispute with the French about the inscription on the tombstone: "Napoleon" or "Bonaparte"; they could not agree, and the grave remained nameless. Perhaps it were better so: for here lay one greater than Bonaparte and greater than Napoleon—the *Man.*

"I desire my remains to repose on the banks of the Seine"—this desire of his was fulfilled. Yet perhaps, his bard, Lermontov, is right: the manes of the Emperor yearn after

> That torrid isle beneath a far-off sky,
> Where indomitable and sublime as he,
> The Ocean guarded his repose.

and where above his nameless grave shone the *Constellation of the Cross.* In his lifetime he never understood what was perhaps revealed to him in death: the meaning of the Cross.

Napoleon never prayed for himself, but it seems that

[31] Masson.

the most fitting ending to his life story would be a prayer:

Give rest, O Lord, in the Kingdom of the just to the soul of Thy servant Napoleon.

THE END

France, 1927.

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